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NOVEMBER 2015

HOT ROD

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AUTO RACING 1955:
A.J. IN A BELLY TANKER?

PASSIONATE

PURPLE DEUCE

RE-CREATING
A LEGENDARY
STREET/STRIP
COUPE

**SPECIAL
COUPE
SECTION
INSIDE**



★ **BOWLING GREEN
HOT ROD REUNION**

**WORLD OF
SPEED MUSEUM**

**FROM BONNEVILLE
TO THE BRICKYARD
AND BACK:**

**RODDING PIONEER
SKIP HEDRICH**

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TEN

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HOT ROD DELUXE

> The 1964 running of the Indy 500 is notable for two milestones. One was the fiery death of beloved driver Eddie Sachs, an event that had a huge impact on racer and fabricator Skip Hedrich. Dick Martin tells Skip's story—including that fateful day in May—starting on page 60. Bob D'Olivo shot this photo earlier in the month of Sachs buckling his helmet before taking the Ford-DOHC-powered Shrike out for qualifying.

• PICS: BOB D'OLIVO

MENU ♦ NOVEMBER 2015

★ 06 FLAG MAN

Man, I hate making mistakes.

08 WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

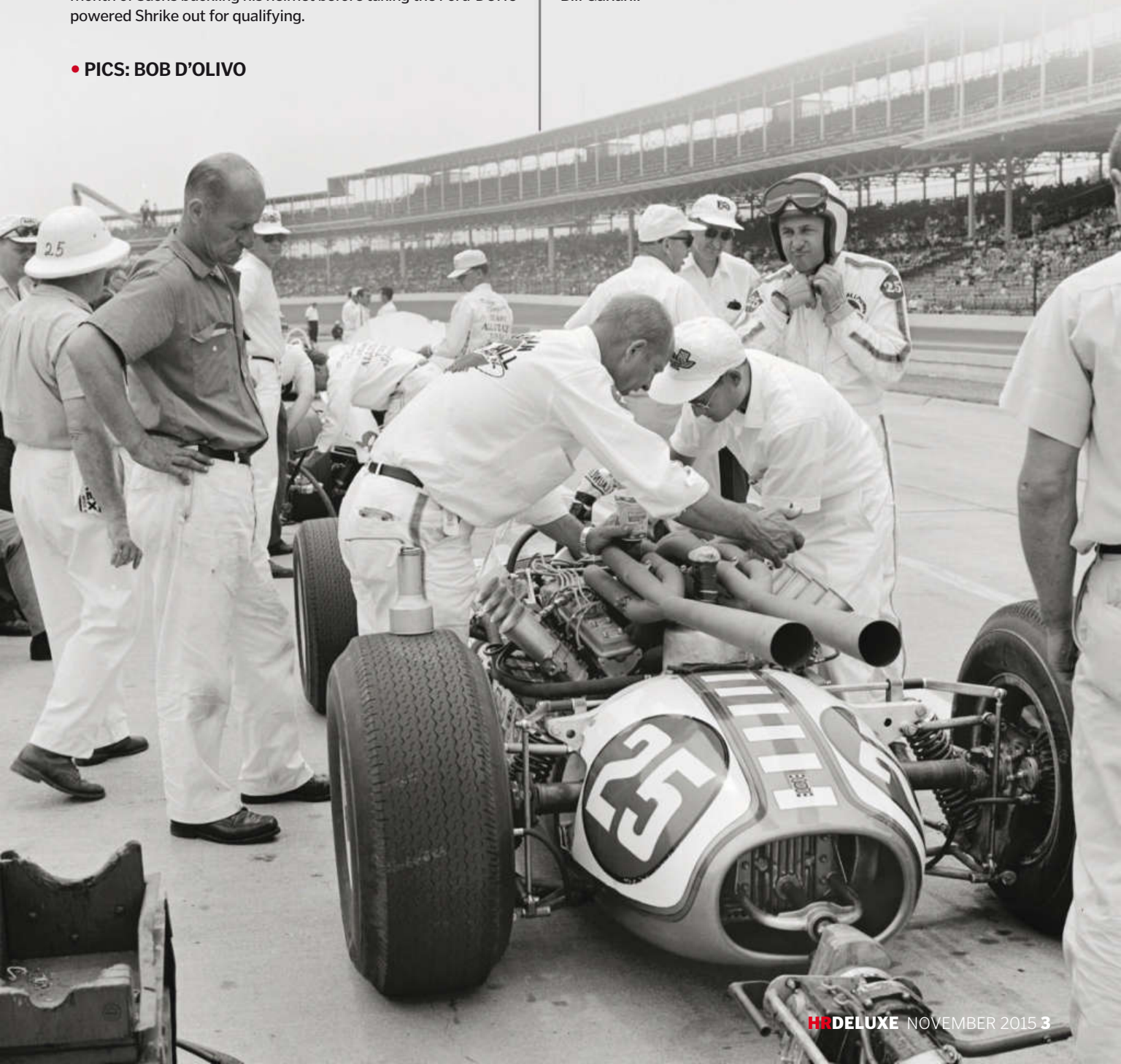
Even the greats did their wrenching back at the motel at the end of the day.

10 RODDIN' @ RANDOM

At the grand opening of the World of Speed Museum in Oregon, saying goodbye to Safety Safari leader Bud Coons, and checking out the action at the Bowling Green Hot Rod Reunion.

22 NEXT CHAPTER

Cover story: Re-creating the iconic Bill Breece purple Deuce coupe was a labor of love for Richard Munz and South City's Bill Ganahl.





> The '64 race also marked a significant turning point: the last victory for front-engine roadsters at the Brickyard. A.J. Foyt (left) outlasted the faster mid-engine cars and found himself dueling with Parnelli Jones (right) until a pit fire put PJ out of the running. From there Foyt cruised to the checkered flag. You can see Foyt in a different kind of race in "Power Struggles" (p. 50), the first installment in our new series looking back at auto racing history.

MENU ♦ NOVEMBER 2015

32 BLACK AND WHITE

These chopped and channeled '34 coupes may look like opposites, but they're more alike than it may appear.

40 FROM GLASS TO FIRST CLASS

When a fiberglass street rod just wasn't cutting it, Don Nicita revived an historic East Coast coupe.

50 POWER STRUGGLES

Part 1: Our photographic review of American auto racing history begins in 1955.

60 BRICKYARD DREAMS, SALT FLAT MEMORIES: THE SKIP HEDRICH STORY

Skip's is a story of top-tier effort, from the dry lakes to the Indy 500 to the Salt Flats.

66 PARTS WITH APPEAL

Retro-look gauges, a Hallock windshield frame reproduction, and a fan to keep your hot rod's cool.

70 TIME WARP

Kicking off the buildup of our altered project's FE motor with a solid foundation.

76 SCRAPBOOK

A tribute to Grandpa, a Nice 'n Nasty roadster, Half Moon Bay memories, Lil' Screamer, and more.

82 TROPHY GIRL

Handing out the hardware at the Go Kart National Championships.



ON THE COVER

Richard Munz's Passionate Purple Deuce made its debut in the South City Rod & Custom booth at this year's Grand National Roadster Show, but it took a second viewing at the LA Roadsters' Father's Day show to make us realize how perfect this re-creation of the August 1956 HRM cover car would be for our coupe-themed issue. Bill Ganahl's work on the car is just outstanding, as you'll see in our cover story beginning on page 22. The Wally Parks NHRA Museum graciously let us in during off-hours so Wes Allison could photograph the Deuce, while a very appealing Veronica Jensen lit up the place.

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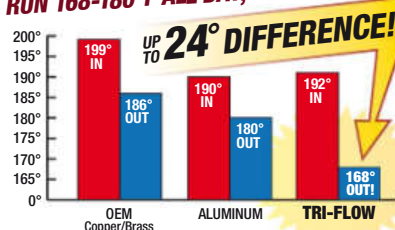


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Mistakes? I've Made a Few ★

The thing I like most about my job is the fact that I'm always learning. But I have to admit, I prefer doing the learning *before* putting something in print, not after.

Anyone who serves as the capital-E Editor of a magazine is responsible for every piece of editorial in that magazine. If a writer gets something wrong and it makes it into print, well, then, yes, the writer was wrong. But the capital-E Editor chose to run that material, so really the wrong falls on their shoulders. They take the bullet.

I get a lot of positive feedback from readers of this magazine, which I love. But then there are the days when I get correspondence that just makes me cringe.

The latest pummeling was over "Mementos from a Lifetime of Speed," the story about Clem TeBow in the July '15 issue. The mistakes made had to do with the Offenhauser engine's track record at Indy, and the tragic German land-speed record attempt that killed Auto Union race driver Bernd Rosemeyer in 1938.

I will admit to being an expert at very few things. Indianapolis racing and German land-speed record attempts are not on that very short list. So I let pass the information writer Scotty Gosson put in the story, figuring that he did his research before writing the piece, as I would have done.

Then I started getting the emails.

Our saying that the Offenhauser in Parnelli Jones' 1963 Indy 500-winning car "was ultimately the last Offy to even finish at Indy" was, to reader Ken Keltner, "probably the grossest error ever printed in HOT ROD Deluxe! To state that the last time an Offy finished at Indy was in 1963 is ridiculous! An Offy won the next year! Offenhauser engines also won the Indy 500 in 1968 and 1972-'76."

Ken was one of several readers who called me out on this error. This goof really got to me, since I've considered adding front-engine Indy roadsters to the editorial mix here at Deluxe, and I should know these kinds

of things about those cars. You can bet I'm boning up on my Indy history so this doesn't happen again.

About the Rosemeyer reference, reader Doug Nicoli echoed the sentiments of other readers when he cited "several critical errors concerning the Auto Union record-holding streamliner." (If you haven't read the story, the context was this: TeBow and his partner Don Clark built the flathead that propelled the City of Burbank streamliner to take the FIA C-Class land speed record away from Auto Union and Rosemeyer in 1952.)

"There is no record that I have seen stating that Rosemeyer was ever connected to the Nazi SS, and I have been a student of prewar GP racing since the 1950s," Doug wrote. "The record car was powered by a V-16 designed and built by Auto Union and not its major competitor, Mercedes Benz. The cause of the accident has been attributed to a side wind for close to 80 years and not to 'several untested drivetrain

and chassis components,' as Mr. Gosson claims in his writings. Rosemeyer was the lead driver on the Auto Union Grand Prix team, so I doubt it was Hitler who picked him to drive the record car."

The research I've done since receiving the emails supports most of Doug's assertions. Calling Rosemeyer an SS officer wasn't exactly wrong, but it was a mischaracterization. I found a couple of sources that said Rosemeyer was granted an honorary officership in the SS, but it was a propaganda move by the party due to his very public exploits behind the wheel and not because of any political views he held. As for the reasons for his fatal crash, crosswinds did certainly set the accident in motion. But a thoroughly documented account, compiled from first-hand resources and published online on the 65th anniversary of Rosemeyer's death (www.kolumbus.fi/leif.snellman/zana.htm), does blame hasty preparations and primitive aerodynamics for Rosemeyer not



being able to maintain control of the car when it was buffeted.

When I asked Scotty about these errors, he told me he struggled with this story when he was unable to interview Don Clark or anyone else closely associated with TeBow. "When I failed to find Clark, I should have notified you that there was a problem, and ceased work on the project. I did not. I found other sources of information that I deemed credible and continued on. I am obviously neither a war historian, nor a motorsports expert. I know about drag racing and hot rods, period. I was out of my league on this piece."

The bottom line here is this: I know how important history—and historical accuracy—are to the readers of this magazine. So I will continue to do my best to make sure you can trust what you read here. I will seek expert help when I need to, and that includes from readers who I'm sure will continue to write me to keep us honest.

—DREW HARDIN

★ **EMAIL ME:**
DREWHARDIN57@GMAIL.COM

> This month's flag man is doing his thing on the beach at Daytona during NASCAR's Speedweeks in 1956. In the interest of historical accuracy, I'm throwing up my hands and admitting I can't tell if the blurry finisher is an Olds, Pontiac, or Buick. I'm sure someone out there will set us straight.

HOT ROD DELUXE

NOVEMBER 2015

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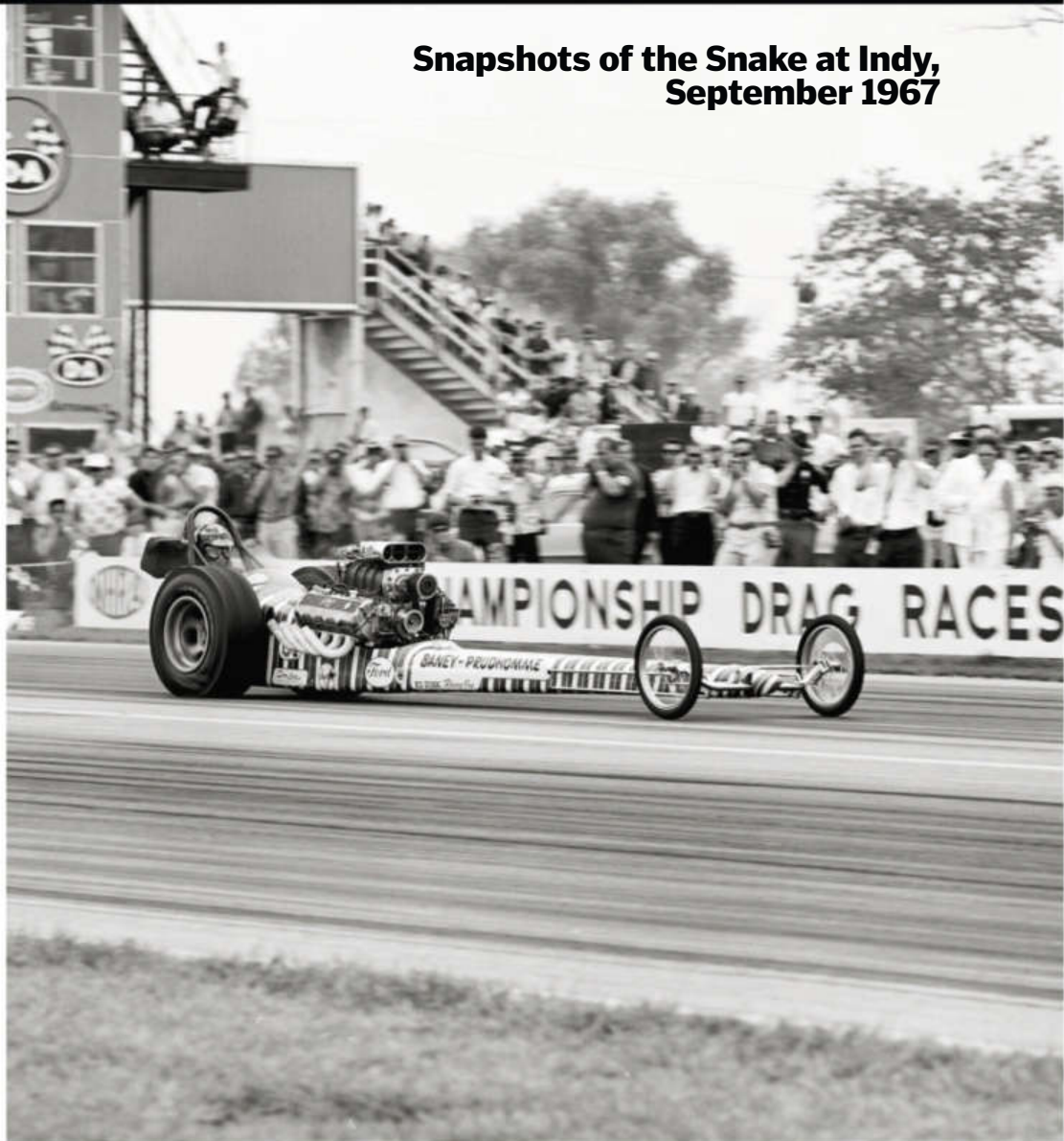
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Snapshots of the Snake at Indy, September 1967



Back when the racers all trailered up their cars at the end of each day/night during an event, after-hours wrenching was done at the motel. The SOHC fuel motor (by Ed Pink) belongs to Lou Baney (seen at left in Bob Swaim's parking lot photo). Don Prudhomme drove the Brand Motors Special to several big wins during the 1967 season, the best for FoMoCo dragsters since the flat-head (and also best ever).

Swaim also captured Baney, Pink and Prudhomme huddling over that engine in the pits; look close and you can catch Keith Black walking by in the background. Starting in 1968, most of the top-tier Cammer teams started switching back to Chryslers, either the ol' reliable 392 or the 426 that was just beginning to haul ass on nitro.

—DAVE WALLACE



Ribbon Ripper

The ribbon-cutting ceremony for the grand opening of the World of Speed museum outside of Portland was our kind of deal: Curator Ron Huegli powered through the blue ribbon in the nitro-snorting AA/Fuel Altered originally campaigned by Dave and Linda Hough, who stood by nervously.

—DAVE WALLACE



World of Speed's Grand Opening

When the mayor's long, painful speech finally ended and several hundred folks began filing into the World of Speed, the town of Wilsonville, Oregon, rocketed from nondescript bedroom community to epicenter of Northwestern hot rodding. Gearheads here finally have a common meeting place to replace racetracks and speed shops long gone from Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and western Canada.

For the rest of us, the World of Speed is nothing less than a world-class collection of speedy cars and speed-related memorabilia, all showcased inside of a luxuriously repurposed Infiniti dealership on Interstate 5. Straight-line acceleration is emphasized in some wonderful exhibits. Nowhere have we seen so many artifacts devoted

to land-speed racing. Vintage radios, TV sets, LP jackets, guitars, car stereos, and even furniture line the walls.

Sally Bany, whose parents started Columbia Sportswear, and hubby David, a former mechanic, admit to an ulterior motive, but it's not showing off their stuff or turning a profit. Rather, they hope to enlighten and educate young people about the benefits and satisfaction of automotive careers, particularly in motorsports. Field trips are encouraged, no charge. Hands-on exhibits let kids of all ages operate mechanical components ranging from a rear-axle assembly to a Funny Car fuel pump. A full-sized classroom and literature archive are available to teachers and group leaders, also free.



NORTHWEST PRIDE

NORTHWEST PRIDE: Though this museum is not focused on this region, the Great Northwest is well represented in display vehicles and special exhibits. In the '50s and '60s, Oregon and Washington 'strips regularly hosted some of the fiercest fuel racing outside of California.



STAGES OF SPEED

STAGES OF SPEED: Significant Ford, Chevy, Chrysler, and Pontiac V-8s illustrate the evolution of American racing powerplants from the flathead to the 426 Hemi (far end). A 1960s-style speed shop completes the scene.

• PICS: DAVE WALLACE



• PICS: DAVE WALLACE

★ T&A TITILLATION

The full impact of what this place means to Northwestern rodders and racers hit home in conversation with Katrina O'Brien, the full-time archivist and collections manager. She pointed to a vintage dragstrip jacket that some old-timer had just donated, then pulled out a cardboard carton stuffed with racing mementos. "It's the second box today," she said. "This guy drove home, then brought back all of these memories. It brought a tear to my eye."

—DAVE WALLACE

T&A TITILLATION: A 15-year-old named Robert E. Lee combined a '27 T roadster pickup with Model A fenders to create this show winner. Chuck Lawrence picked up the pickup in 1963, let it get away a year later, and finally got it back in 2000—reportedly with the same dual-carb 354 Chrysler that Lee installed.

OREGON'S OWN: Longtime HRM readers will recognize the featured '35 Phaeton of Wayne Mahaffey and the Deuce cover car of Bill Peterson. Wayne sold the Cad-powered Phaeton twice, in 1958 and 1987, but bought it back in 2001. Chuck Lawrence is the lucky owner of the restored Peterson roadster.

DUTCH IMPORT: Having seen Von Dutch's work truck surface at Ralph Whitworth's big L.A. auction, then serve as a tow vehicle at Famoso Raceway, we were relieved to see it land safely in the personal collection of Sally and David Bany. Dutch painted and drove the Econoline while working for a long-defunct SoCal museum, Movie World: Cars of the Stars and Planes of Fame.

NO JOKE: Dick "The Joker" Kalivoda was quick to pull the engine cover for anyone asking to see his legendary fuel modified roadster's original injected DeSoto. He also brought the first of countless awards this car earned, a clock trophy (foreground) from Pacific Raceway's grand opener, July 4, 1960.



★ IN-DASH THRASH

IN-DASH THRASH: The only grand-opening glitch we noticed (other than typical Oregon drizzle) was a sticking set of radio push buttons in this cool display. Rushing to the rescue was Tony Thacker, serving his final day as museum director after three years of commuting 1,000 miles from his SoCal home to oversee extensive remodeling of the former new-car dealership and construction of exhibits.



★ OREGON'S OWN



★ DUTCH IMPORT



★ NO JOKE

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HITTING THE ROAD

HITTING THE ROAD: Though Rickman normally chronicled the Safari's activities, Bob D'Olivo shot this publicity photo of Bud Coons (right), Chic Cannon (center) and Wally Parks in May of 1955, before the start of the cross-country tour.

Bud Coons

Eldo J. "Bud" Coons, the former police officer who joined the NHRA in its infancy and led the original Drag and Safety Safaris in the mid 1950s, passed away in June at age 90.

Coons is best known as the very public face of those Safaris, undertaken in 1954-'56 to spread Wally Parks' gospel of safe, NHRA-sanctioned drag racing across the country. During the first tour, he was accompanied by Chic Cannon and Petersen photographer Eric Rickman; in 1955 Bud Evans became the fourth permanent member of the Safari team. Rickman passed away in 2009, Evans in 2014, leaving Cannon as the sole surviving member of that original troupe. (Chic is currently working on a memoir that we can't wait to read.)

With his background in law enforcement, Coons brought a level of credibility to the Safari effort. It was he who typically met with local police and government officials when they arrived at a host city. He also did a lot of press for the tours, showing up on TV and radio while the Safari was in town.

Yet Coons' interest in and work on promoting safe drag

racing predates the NHRA Safaris. A former hot rodder himself, Coons was a sergeant in the Pomona Police Department when he was asked by then LAPD Chief Ralph Parker to help a local hot rod club, the Choppers, cut down on the number of street racing incidents in the city. Coons and club members convinced Pomona officials to pave a portion of the Los Angeles County Fairgrounds to use as a dragstrip. Not long after—in April 1953—that track was the site of the first NHRA-sanctioned drag



SCHMOOZING

SCHMOOZING: Coons' background in law enforcement meant he was the one dispatched to brief local officials about the coming drag race when the Safari pulled into town. Quarters in the trailer and wagon were cramped, but he had to pack a suit to meet with city officials, as he's doing here in Orange, Massachusetts.

race, and it has since become the cornerstone of the entire NHRA drag racing program.

Coons' work in building that 'strip landed him on Wally Parks' radar, and he soon gave up his patrolman job for a position in the fledgling NHRA. Coons used his personal two-door Dodge station wagon to tow the NHRA trailer on the '54 Safari, before Plymouth stepped up to provide the team with transportation for the '55 and '56 Safaris.

In his new series on the history of American auto racing, "Power Struggles" (see page 50), Dave Wallace tells tales of the '55 Safari. More Safari history can be found in "Dawn of the Drags," a Sept. '04 HRM article I wrote as part of the 50th anniversary celebration of the first Safari. (If you don't have back issues, the story lives on hotrod.com). It was

a privilege, and a career highlight, to interview Coons, along with Evans, Cannon, Rickman, and Parks, for that story.

Though the Safaris ended in 1956, Coons continued to work for the NHRA before founding a business building RVs and travel trailers. He eventually retired to the desert Southwest.

It's hard to understate the importance of what Coons and his fellow Safari team members did during those long weeks on the road. Yes, their trailer full of timing equipment and miles of wire introduced organized drag racing to far-flung corners of the U.S. But they also helped cement the notion of drag racing not as some outlaw activity, but as a safe and even family-friendly sport. It's a legacy that lives to this day.

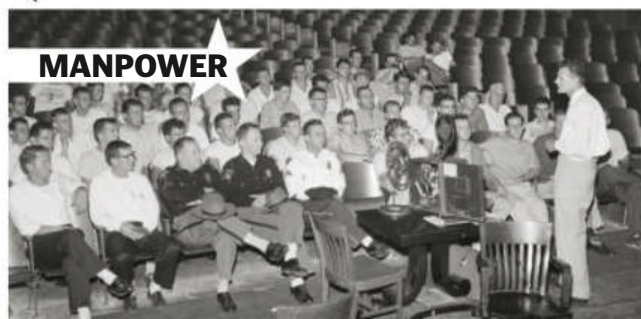
—DREW HARDIN



COONS MANUFACTURING

COONS MANUFACTURING:

When he left the NHRA, Coons started a camper and RV manufacturing facility in Pomona, not far from the dragstrip he helped create. HRM's Ray Brock shot this photo of him with a camper for a Ranchero in August 1958.



MANPOWER

MANPOWER: "Really, all the manpower came from the clubs," Coons said about running those early races. Car club members, police officers, and other members of the community get briefed by Coons in Columbus, Ohio, in August 1955.

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• PICS: GERRY BURGER



★ HALLOWED WILLYS

HALLOWED WILLYS: Frankie Allen and his '33 "Trick or Treat" Willys gave the fans in the stands a real treat, leaving wheels high. This is one super-sano coupe.

In spite of local weather forecasts, the 13th Annual Holley NHRA Hot Rod Reunion in Bowling Green turned out to be "lucky 13," as most of the rain stayed away from historic Beech Bend Raceway Park. Over the three-day event, the track was only wet for about six hours, and the great crew at Beech Bend handled the job of getting the track ready and the races completed.

This event has earned a reputation as a must-attend event for thousands of East Coast hot rodders, and this year it appeared there were more nostalgia race cars on hand than ever before. There is something for everyone at the reunion. Hot rods, muscle cars, and customs of every description fill the grass show fields, while the swap meet adjoins the long pit area. It's a great place to check out some cool cars and scrounge for parts between race rounds.

Behind the dragstrip starting line is a small paved oval

racetrack filled with static displays of historically significant race cars. Many of these cars are still owned by the original builders, or the original drivers and builders are on hand to tell the history of the cars. There is also an autograph tent where

you could have met this year's Grand Marshal Gordon Collett, along with honorees Ron Hope, Chase Knight, Ron Leek, Roy Steffey, Dale Moody, and Sam Jones. It's a great opportunity to speak firsthand with pioneers of drag racing and learn the

real history of the cars in the process.

The Grand Marshal and honorees were front and center at the Friday Hot Rod Reunion Reception, followed by a mini Cacklefest in front of the host hotel. Half a dozen Top Fuel



★ SMOKE SCREEN

SMOKE SCREEN: We never tire of monster burnouts, and few things are better than watching a classic straight-axle '55 gasser buried in smoke from the door handles back.

★ STREET & STRIP



STREET & STRIP: Not all the gassers were on the track. Mike Iannazzo's mile-high Bel Air spent the weekend on the grass, but when you hear this '55 run you know it's the real deal.

cars fired off to end the Friday evening activities.

The big news on Saturday was the upset win in Top Fuel. After dominating the class for the past two years, Tony Bartone went down in the final round against Bill Dunlap in the High Speed Motorsports dragster. "Upset" may be too strong a word, since the High Speed Motorsports team is no stranger to winning at Bowling Green. It was a classic East versus West final, and the West Coast team put the East Coast boys on the trailer with a winning time of 5.733 at 251.95 mph.

The event traditionally ends Saturday evening with the giant Cacklefest, when the night air is filled with flames, fumes, and noise only a mass firing of Top Fuelers can emit. By ending on Saturday, many folks are able to be home for Father's Day.

While we didn't do the official math, it seemed like there was a larger Top Fuel field this year, and it appeared the overall race car count was at an all-time high. Throw in a couple jet exhibition cars, a wheelstander, and great wheel-to-wheel racing, and it is no mystery why the Holley NHRA Hot Rod Reunion is such a huge success every year. We'll be back again next year, as this event is just too good to miss.

—GERRY BURGER



★ LITTLE BLACK BOX



★ PICK YOUR BATTLES

PICK YOUR BATTLES:

Gassers are based on light-weight cars, and the Henry J and less common Allstate are definitely light cars. With 468 ci under the hood, the Battle & Reid car should be ready to do battle.

LITTLE BLACK BOX: Brandon Hibdon nailed it with this simple black '50 Ford. Frenched headlights, '57 Caddy caps, and shaved door handles keep things clean and simple on this shoebox. Under the hood a small-block Ford provides ample power.



★ GAS & CLASS COMBO

GAS & CLASS COMBO: Back in the day, race cars were generally hauled on open trailers with a wide variety of tow vehicles. Michael Neal chose his '56 Chrysler to haul his Topolino from Windsor Walls, Mississippi. Who would've imagined back then that Fiat would someday own Chrysler, and not the other way around?





HIGH ON SPEED

HIGH ON SPEED: Bill Dunlap emerged from this burnout victorious as the High Speed Motorsports team managed to topple Tony Bartone in the Top Fuel finals. The team worked hard all weekend to get to the top.



IN THE RAW

IN THE RAW: Rich Linder decided that rather than buff, he'd simply leave his hammered '49 in the buff. After all, he had nothing to hide. The bare metal beauty has gorgeous proportions, and the Sombrero hubcaps are spot on.



BREATHLESS

BREATHLESS: Larry and Nancy Morton hauled their '33 Willys coupe down from Canada for the Hot Rod Reunion. Under that scoop, 347 inches of Mouse motor propel the gasser.

A TRUE CHAMPION: Just the three words "Champion Speed Shop" conjure up thoughts of dragsters of every size and description. The current steed is this canopied slingshot that embodies the spirit of every rail that came before it.

ON THE TRAILER: We moved in for a closer look at the Neal Fiat. The car is '60s period perfect, with flake and fish scales, gold leaf, and white zoomies. We also noticed the nice lightweight trailer hooked to the Chrysler.



A TRUE CHAMPION



ON THE TRAILER



TWISTED TRIBUTE: The legend and lore of the fastback Nova is a discussion that continues today, with a clouded history from when Bill Thomas first built the cars. This tribute car was built in memory of the famed Huston Platt.



TWISTED TRIBUTE ★

★ AN AUSTIN BY MORRIS

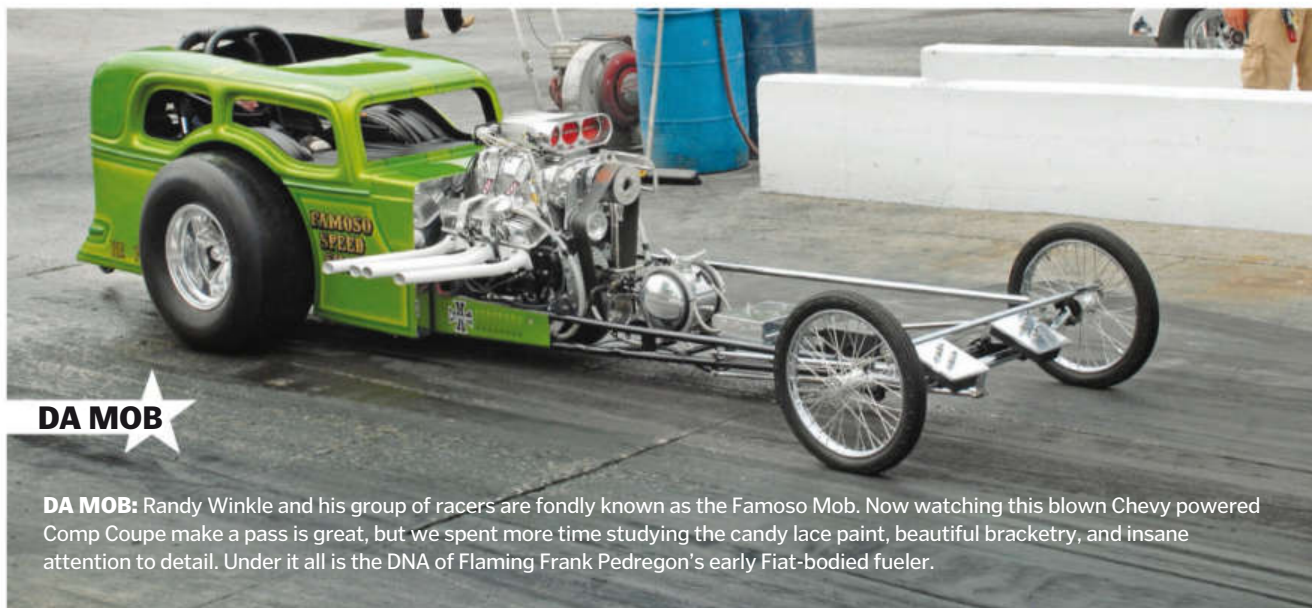


AN AUSTIN BY MORRIS: The A-40 Austin was a small British car. While it may have been designed for economy, today, in hot rod circles, they are best known for traveling a quarter-mile at a time. This street-going gasser is the work of Billy Morris from the great gasser state of Ohio.



★ **TEXAS TWO-STEP**

TEXAS TWO-STEP: We're not sure which we like more, Jack Chisenhall's recently discovered and restored San Antonio Speed Shop AA/FD, or his very cool candy green '59 El Camino. As a team they make a real '60s statement.



★ **DA MOB**

DA MOB: Randy Winkle and his group of racers are fondly known as the Famoso Mob. Now watching this blown Chevy powered Comp Coupe make a pass is great, but we spent more time studying the candy lace paint, beautiful bracketry, and insane attention to detail. Under it all is the DNA of Flaming Frank Pedregon's early Fiat-bodied fueler.

★ THE CACKLE LINE



THE CACKLE LINE: While the rain delay made for a long day at the track, there is still nothing to compare to a night Cacklefest. Funny and Fuel cars lined both sides of the track.

SCENE AT THE BOWLING GREEN HOT ROD REUNION (CONT'D)



★ GLOWING ZOOMIES

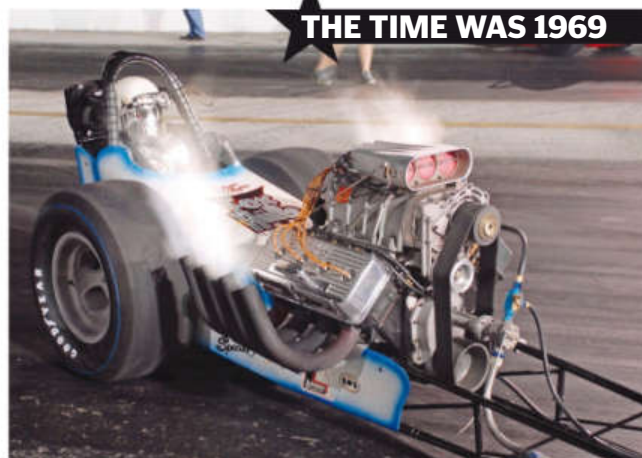
GLOWING ZOOMIES: If that sounds like something lurking in the dark, you're right. The Don Bowman fueler was producing great fire through those red-hot headers. The car is beautifully restored.

LAST IN LINE: By the early '70s the rear-engine dragster had established itself. This car was Gary "Mr. C" Cochran's last fuel dragster. He continued to drive for years after, but this was the last Top Fuel car he owned. It put on quite a show.

THE TIME WAS 1969: With Roger Clayton behind the wheel, the Fox & Hulls Top Fuel dragster was campaigned in the late '60s and early '70s from the Chicago area with Don Fox as crew chief.



★ LAST IN LINE



★ THE TIME WAS 1969

ROCKET

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NEXT CHAPTER



➤ Bill Ganahl of South City Rod & Custom was chosen to recreate the Bill Breece coupe, due to his building skills as well as extensive experience restoring historic hot rods. Though the car has a Brookville body, all the other parts are gennie and period correct for a 1955 build. "Sometimes I was on the phone for days doing research," Bill says. "This was a totally different kind of build than a new hot rod or custom."

RE-CREATION.

Southern California hot rodders tend to get a little provincial about their hobby. Rodding was born in SoCal, so the story goes, and almost all of rodding's pioneers and innovators set up shop after World War II in our sunny climes.

It turns out that's a pretty narrow view of rodding's early years. There was plenty of pioneering and innovation going on in other parts of the country.

Let's take Bill Breece as an example. As a teenager in mid-1950s Ohio, he built an Olds-powered '32 three-window coupe in his garage that was stunning in its presentation at the time: a colorful, gleaming work of hot rodding art that could hold its own at any car show in the nation. Yet it was far more than just a show car. Despite its rich purple paintjob, its white and pink (!) upholstery, and all the shining plate and polish from the firewall forward, Breece's Deuce was a runner. He raced the car locally, and then not so locally, driving it west in 1955 to the inaugural NHRA national drag in Great Bend, Kansas. He won a class trophy at the race's



> This is how the Breece coupe looked when it was displayed at the 75th anniversary celebration at the 2007 Grand National Roadster Show. It's no wonder its new owner, Richard Munz, didn't recognize this as the same car until its show board came out. Breece started the transformation in 1957; work was finished by subsequent owners over the years.

show, and then kept heading West, until he reached California, won another trophy at the Motorama, and had Von Dutch stripe his car's dashboard. Eric Rickman photographed the car in October 1955, and it appeared on the cover and inside the Aug. '56 issue of HOT ROD.

This teenager from Ohio—not Los Angeles, Burbank, or Pasadena—created a chopped Deuce coupe so handsome in its execution that it has since become an icon. It was recognized as one of the 75 most significant '32 Fords during that model's 75th anniversary in 2007.

Those standout Deuces gathered that year for a special display in Building 9 at the Grand National Roadster Show. Longtime collector Richard Munz brought two of them out from his stable in Madison, Wisconsin, the Neal East and Tommy Foster roadsters. Sharing the transporter with his cars was a '32 he didn't recognize, a chopped and channeled, full-fendered three-window.

Intrigued, he asked the transport driver where the car came from. Milwaukee was the answer. The owner was not coming to the show—had health issues—so the truck driver had to roll the

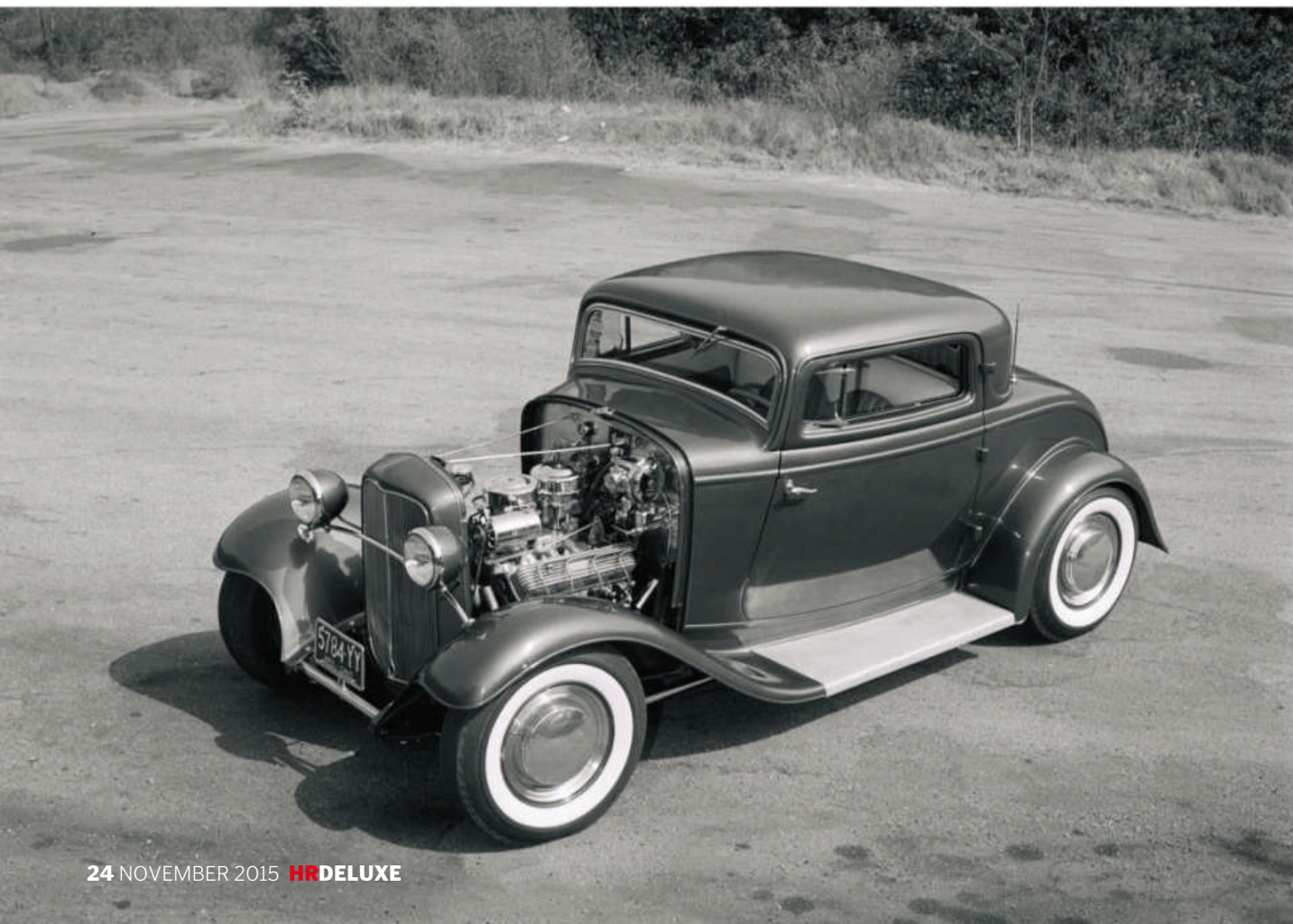
car into the building. He told Munz the car might be for sale.

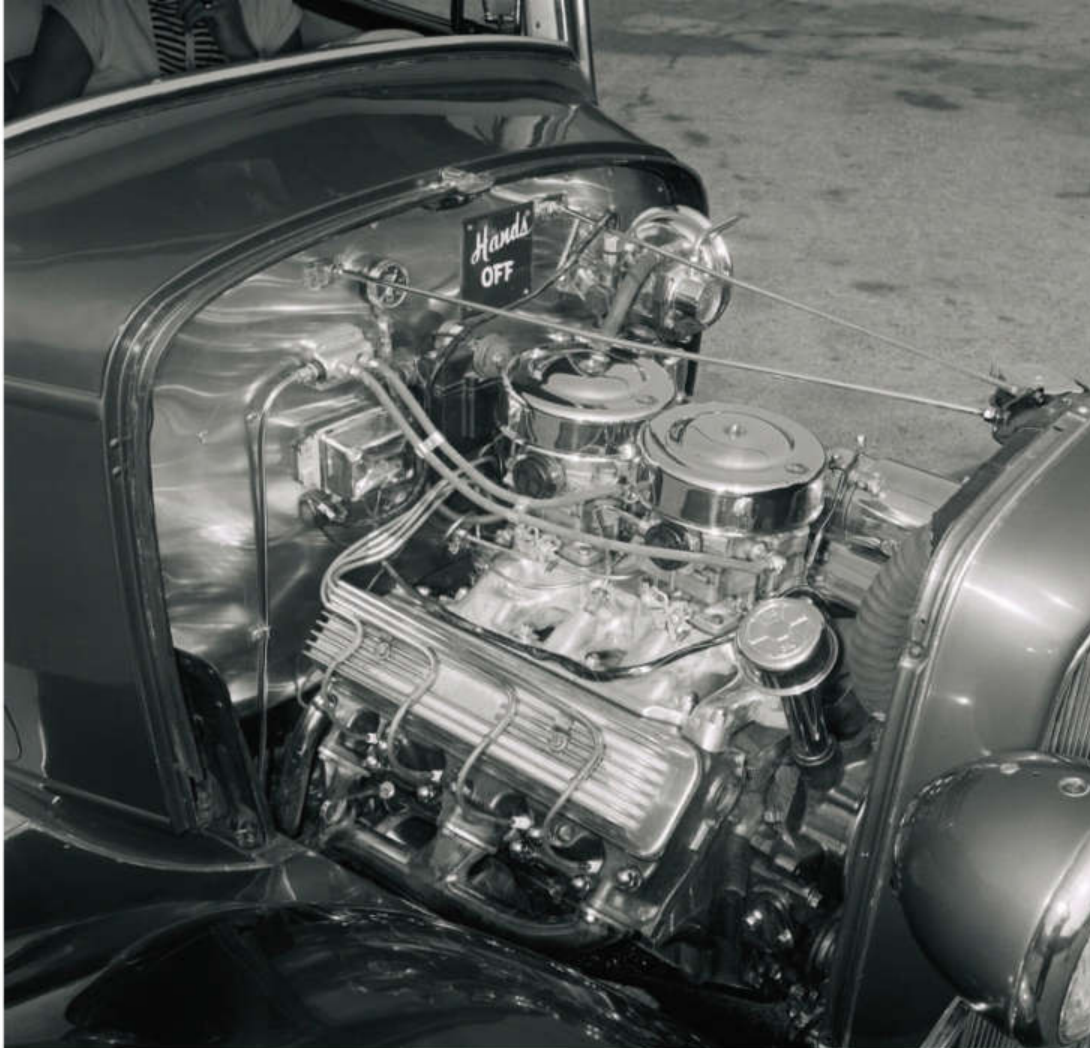
With that, Munz started making phone calls and soon discovered the owner was a Milwaukee Lincoln Mercury dealer named Dewey Cherek. Turns out he was related to a Leonard Cherek, who did a lot of drywall work for Munz. After a short conversation and a wire transfer of funds, Munz became the coupe's new owner.

He walked into Building 9 and found NHRA Museum Curator Greg Sharp and journalist and rodding historian Ken Gross standing next to his new acquisition, giving the car a close once-over. "What do you think?" Munz asked them. "We think it's changed a lot," came the answer. As if on cue, the car's showboard came out, with the photo of a young Ohioan sitting in a purple coupe with pink and white upholstery. And Munz realized he was the new owner of what was—and, yet, still is—the Bill Breece coupe.

It's taken Munz a while to figure out the coupe's evolution, but apparently it didn't stay in its HRM cover car form for very long. In 1957, Breece decided he wanted a channeled hot rod and started the process of cutting up his Deuce. He was a skilled bodyman, but his pace on the car was slow, and he wound up selling it in the

> Eric Rickman photographed Breece's coupe in October 1955, providing lots of reference material for the re-creation. "We don't know what influenced him. He sort of built the car in a vacuum, being back in Ohio," Bill Ganahl says of Breece. "He did his own thing. The vent windows—nobody put vent windows in a '32 three-window. He converted the original '32-style drag-link steering to a cross-steer setup using '48 Ford steering components. No one did that."





> Bill Ganahl believes Breece must have had a '52 Olds donor car, as the engine, along with the dashboard, steering column, and steering wheel, are straight out of a late-model Oldsmobile. For a time Breece drag raced the car with a single four-barrel carburetor before mounting the Edmunds dual-quad manifold and twin Olds carbs.

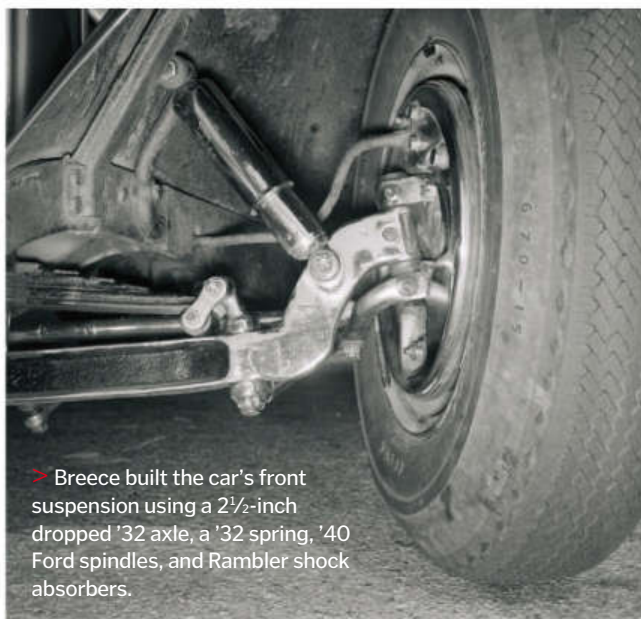


> Sourcing a 303-inch Olds engine for the recreation was one of the project's easier tasks. "The motor I found for Munz is actually the original motor out of the Lepesh '41 pickup that I built," says Bill. The pickup wound up with a small-block Chevy, and its owner, Dave Pozzi, agreed to part with the Olds mill once Bill convinced him it was going to a good home.

> Like all the other parts on the car, those are gennie Edmunds valve covers. "It's tough to find Edmunds valve covers that are good enough quality for a show car," Bill admits. "We went through a couple of pairs that weren't good enough. Same with the intake manifold. That stuff is really hard to find if you want it to work as well as look good."



> Breece's mounting the brake booster up on the firewall "was ahead of its time," says Bill. "Those boosters were right out of early T-birds. Hot rodders used them into the '70s until boosters were available in modern form, but they were always put under the chassis." And the "Hands Off" sign? Breece put it there to keep smudgy fingers off his car, but also to cover a hole where the booster was first mounted. "It's one of the first things I had made," says Bill. "It's one of the defining features of the car."



> Breece built the car's front suspension using a 2½-inch dropped '32 axle, a '32 spring, '40 Ford spindles, and Rambler shock absorbers.



> When he couldn't find genuine speed parts, Bill had to fabricate the parts himself. "You have to keep the end game in mind," he says. "If you're chroming something, it has to be perfectly metal finished."



> Brizio's Jack Stratton helped Bill rough out the chassis in Brizio's shop. Comparing the two front suspension photos shows some of the improvements Bill and Jack made to the original design. The location of the shock mounts was moved to improve travel. Framerrails are gennie '32s.

early 1980s as an unfinished project—the channeled and sectioned body sitting on an aftermarket frame with Jaguar suspension bits and a big-block Chevy where the Olds mill used to be.

The car passed through several owners, and other changes were made. Fortunately, some of the car's distinctive original pieces—the Olds dash, Chrysler window cranks, a license plate—traveled with the car, despite all its other modifications. John Stimac, who bought the car in the mid-1980s from a guy named Bubba, was told he had an “interesting car,” Munz said, and eventually learned of the Breece provenance. And so the lineage traveled with the car through a couple more changes of hands until Munz made his deal with Cherek.

But now Munz was faced with a quandary. As it sat, the car was unrecognizable as the Breece coupe. Yet trying to return the car to its former state seemed nearly impossible. So much would have to change that there'd be little left of the original car.

“I got lots of suggestions,” Munz said. “Do this, do that. But I really felt the chapter on the car closed at the 75th anniversary with it looking like it is.” So he decided to leave the car alone.

And yet...he still had those original parts that had come with the car after all these years. So an idea began to form, of re-creating the coupe in its 1955-'56 state. Munz floated the idea by rodding journalist Pat Ganahl, who suggested that his son, Bill, take on the task.

What sounds like a glaring case of nepotism isn't. Bill Ganahl spent years working in Roy Brizio's shop, learning the rod building trade and honing a keen sense of rodding history. He became the go-to guy at Brizio's when a period restoration—the Sam Barris Merc, Ala Kart, Jack Calori coupe—came through the door. By the time Munz was thinking about building a new Breece coupe, Bill had started his own shop, South City Rod & Custom. He, too,



> Why did Bill Breece stitch his interior using white and pink vinyl?
“He was a small dude but he must have had big old balls,” laughs Bill Ganahl. “Who knows? Purple, pink and white, he definitely thought out of the box.”



> Chris Plante, who “does all the interiors of cars done at my shop,” says Bill, painstakingly recreated the right hues of pink and white for the vinyl interior. Note how tall the seat cushion is in the original car. Breece's small stature allowed his legs to fit under the big Olds dash with that tall seat. Richard Munz is much taller, so Bill had to reshape the seat “quite a bit.” “I wanted to stay true to the original, but I can't make an undriveable car.”



> Breece used a narrowed '52 Olds dash in his coupe, a massive piece of metal "that must weigh close to 100 pounds," says Bill. Among the changes Breece made to the dash was molding in the clock and compass.

was in favor of building a new car rather than trying to fashion the channeled coupe into something it would never be again.

Bill is careful in describing what this car is, and isn't. It's not a clone. Not a tribute. It's a re-creation, fashioned around the same Olds dash Breece put in his car 60 years ago. Its envelope is a Brookville repop body, but the rest of the car is built using period-correct gennie parts. Parts that took months to find and recondition before they could go on the car.

Luckily, the Breece coupe was well documented in 1955, so Bill had a guide to follow. But still, getting the top chop just right, fashioning the vent windows and aluminum running boards where there were none, re-creating all the "gingerbread" on that Olds engine, took a remarkable level of craft and dedication.



> This is the very same dash that was in the original coupe; Bill Ganahl essentially built the re-creation around it. Good as Breece's handiwork was back in 1955, "it wasn't up to the standards of a car you're going to debut at the Grand National Roadster Show," Bill says. So he stripped it, took out the old lead, and fixed the corners, transitions, and the fit of the glovebox.

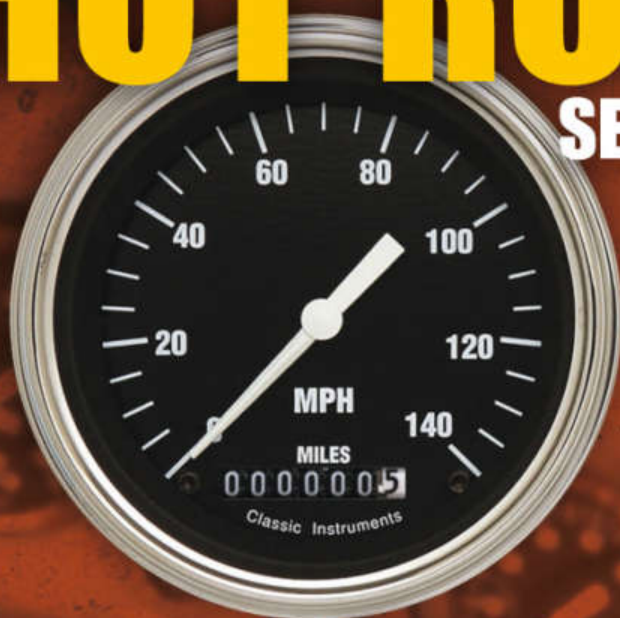


> One area Bill Ganahl didn't exactly copy the original coupe is in the trunk. The upholstery is dead-nuts on, but Bill used a more traditional trunklid release mechanism instead of the screw jack Bill Breece installed in his.



> The steering column and wheel are also out of a '52 Olds. The dash had been modified to take a different steering column drop, so Bill had to rework it to accept a '52 Olds drop again.

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> Richard Munz provided us this photo of Bill Breece racing his coupe in 1954 at the first World Series of Drag Racing at the Half Day Speedway in Laurenceville, Illinois. Note the car is painted, but the Olds engine is equipped with a single carb, and the pink and white interior is not visible inside the car.

Along the way Bill took some liberties, made some improvements to Breece's original handiwork. The car sits a little lower in front thanks to smaller tires. The front shocks are mounted differently to give them more travel, and the rear axle is hung with '36 Ford radius rods rather than the angle iron Breece used. Since it's not an absolute clone destined for the Pebble Beach lawn, Bill also didn't slavishly replicate every single detail. The trunk doesn't open with a screw jack, for example, and those aren't Rambler shocks.

"But the car is darn close," Bill says. "I took it to a more literal restoration than Richard ever anticipated. It's those kinds of details that make or break a history car."



> In 1955, Bill Breece jumped into his coupe and drove it from Ohio to the first NHRA Nationals in Kansas. We couldn't find any photos of Breece racing at Great Bend, but we did find this shot of him in the pits.

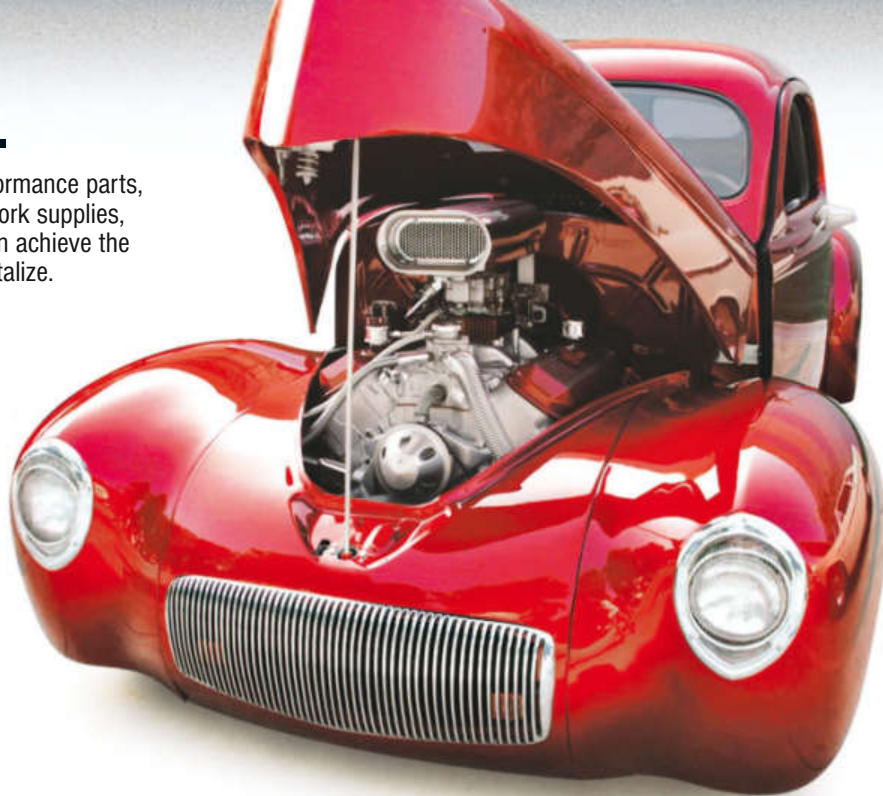


> Once Bill finished all the metalwork on the body—chopping the roof, bobbing the rear fenders, building the running boards, doing the "reverse frenching" of the Pontiac taillights—painter Joe Compagni worked closely with him to replicate the coupe's Passionate Purple color. "It's a different color in every picture," Bill says of the original car. "Everybody thinks they know what color the car is, but no one knows what the color was." Bill and Joe got a huge assist in formulating the proper color when Bill discovered some of the original paint oversprayed on a glovebox hinge bracket. 📷

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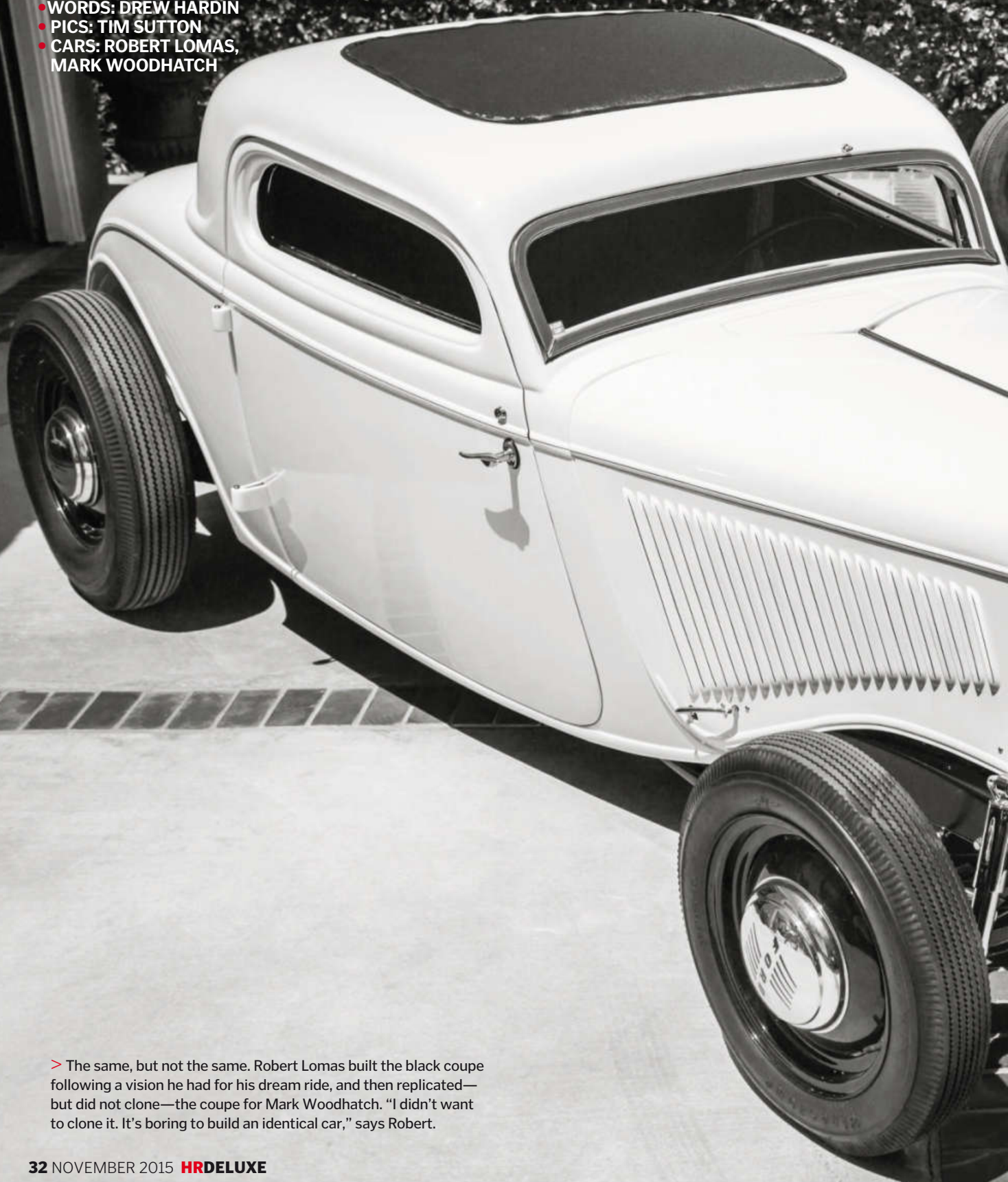
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BLACK & WHITE

• WORDS: DREW HARDIN
• PICS: TIM SUTTON
• CARS: ROBERT LOMAS,
MARK WOODHATCH



> The same, but not the same. Robert Lomas built the black coupe following a vision he had for his dream ride, and then replicated—but did not clone—the coupe for Mark Woodhatch. “I didn’t want to clone it. It’s boring to build an identical car,” says Robert.



OPPOSITES.

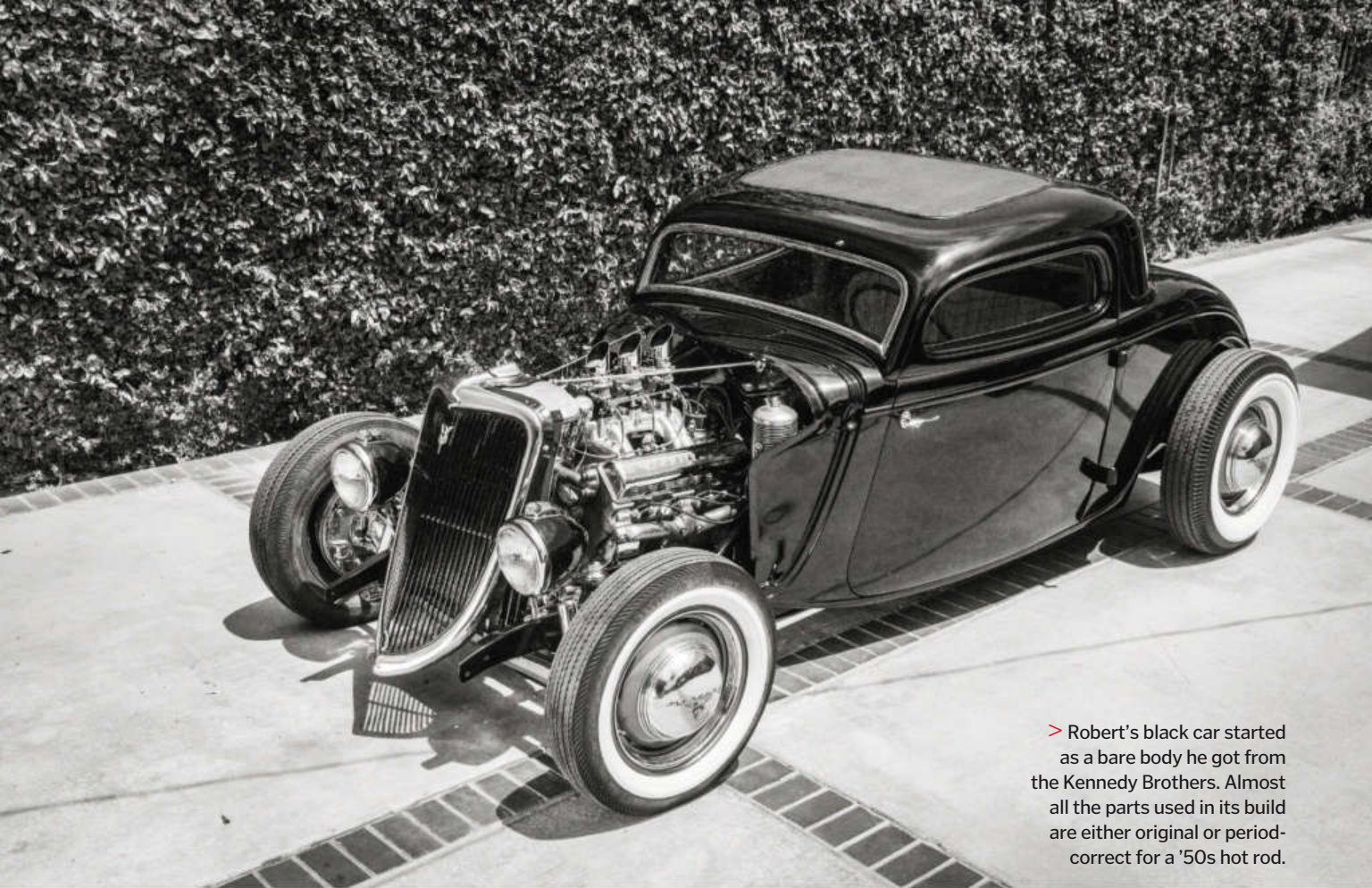
Imitation, they say, is the sincerest form of flattery. Which is why Robert Lomas owns not one, but two chopped and channeled, Cadillac-powered '34 Ford coupes. Well, one and a half, actually. We'll get to that in a bit.

Robert, a bodyman by trade, has been hopping up cars for years. During that time he has owned several hot rods, but they were bought as finished or nearly finished cars. They were his, but not really *his*. So he decided to change that. In 2002 he traded a five-window '34 project car for a bare '34 three-window body that the Kennedy Brothers had at their shop. "It wasn't in bad shape," he remembers. "Some dings and dents, but no major rot."

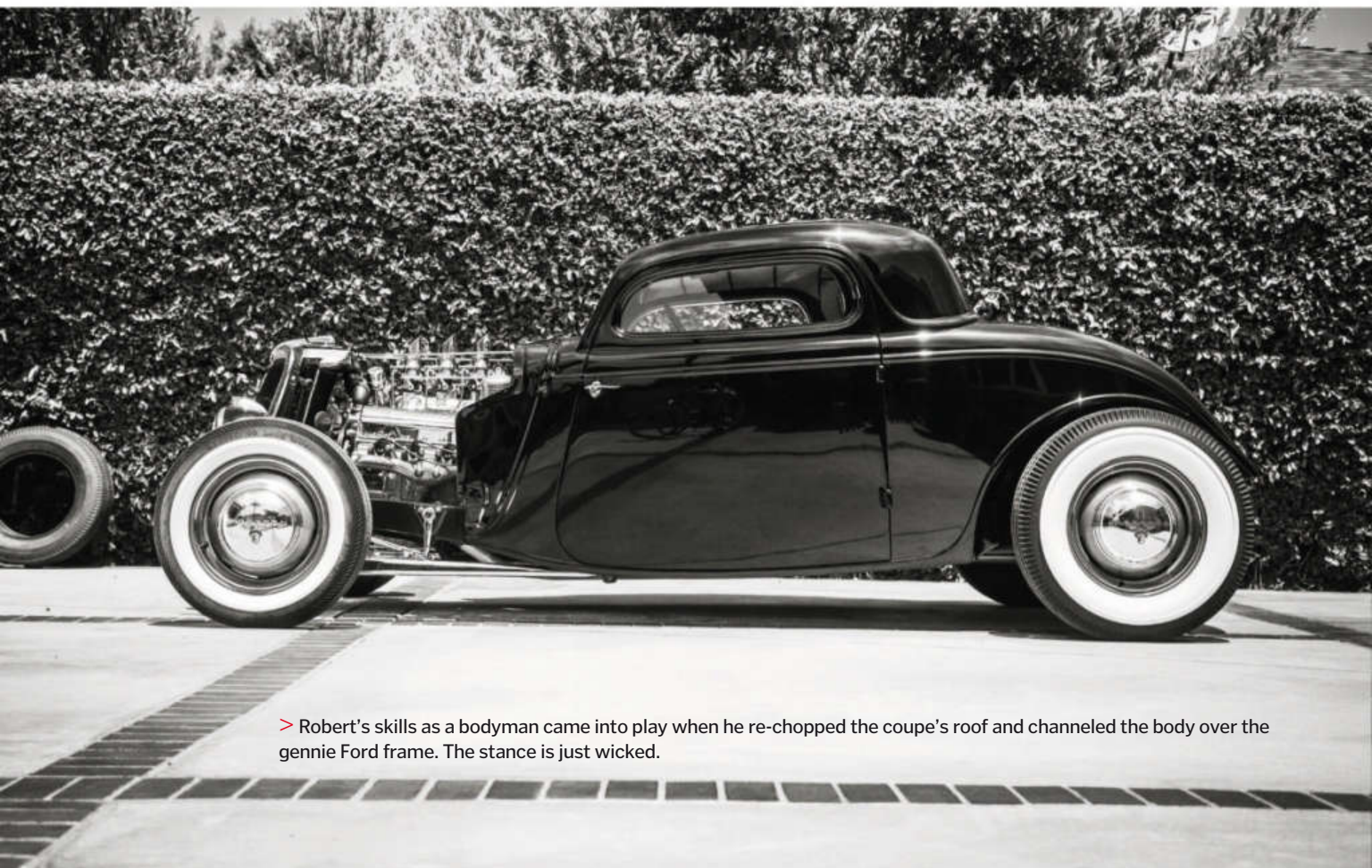
Robert's plan was to take parts and pieces off of some of his other cars and build a hot rod to his taste, one that was truly his own. "Put all the good things into one car," as he says. For instance, the coupe's body had been chopped, "but it was the typical street rod 3-inch chop," says Robert. "I wanted it chopped more, with the posts leaned back."

The channel he devised was something of a wedge shape—dropped 5 inches over the frame in front, but tapering to zero at the back of the body. That frame is original, and Robert worked hard to use just original or period-correct parts throughout this '50s-themed hot rod.

When it was time to choose an engine for the car, Robert realized his flathead days were over. "I wanted something more powerful and more reliable." And so he chose "instant horsepower," a 331-inch '49 Cadillac mill. It was machined at the original Evans Speed Shop in El Monte, California, and then Robert assembled the engine as a fairly mild build: hydraulic cam, ported and polished heads, Offenhauser three-pot intake with Stromberg 97s, and a Mallory ignition. It's backed by a '37 LaSalle transmission, a rare piece he found at the LA Roadsters' Father's Day show swap meet. He took it to Four C's Transmission Specialty in Santa Fe Springs, where Julian made sure it was in working order.



> Robert's black car started as a bare body he got from the Kennedy Brothers. Almost all the parts used in its build are either original or period-correct for a '50s hot rod.



> Robert's skills as a bodyman came into play when he re-chopped the coupe's roof and channeled the body over the gennie Ford frame. The stance is just wicked.



> Robert enlisted the help of longtime rodder and Halibrand expert Dave Enmark to set up the quick-change in his black coupe. Enmark was one of several old-school rodders who helped Robert realize his dream coupe.

To keep the Caddy cool Robert wanted to use an original Ford radiator. "I don't like using aftermarket radiators," he explains. "I just don't like the way they look." So he leaned on the old-school skills of Gonzalo Guzman of Guzman Radiator in El Monte to cut down the big cooler to fit in the trimmer dimensions of the channeled rod.

As with the radiator, a stock grille shell was just too high to fit the car's proportions. Robert managed to find an old aftermarket shell "that was so cheesy, it was an inch shorter than the stock grille. I bought it from a gentleman who was trying to use it on a stock car but he couldn't make it fit. It turned out to be a J.C. Whitney grille from the '50s." Cheesy or no, that missing inch made all the difference in the grille's fit.

Two years after he bought the bare body from the Kennedys, Robert's low-slung black coupe was ready to hit the road. It was an immediate hit, so much so that he constantly got offers to buy the car. He wasn't interested in selling, but he did strike a deal with one potential buyer, a Brit who lives in France named Mark Woodhatch.

"If he couldn't have my car, Mark wanted a car that looked like mine, sat like mine," says Robert. "So I agreed to build one like mine, and we'd be co-owners of the car."



> The '49 Caddy is a fairly mild build, says Robert, which is fine given the engine's torquey nature. The grille shell is a J.C. Whitney catalog item from the '50s that is an inch shorter than stock. Not great if you're restoring a car, but perfect for a channeled rod.



> It's not easy to get a stock seat frame to fit in a channeled car. That's why Robert fabricated a custom seat frame for his coupe. Steering column is from a '39 Ford, "smooth since it had no column shift," says Robert.

As the two talked about the build, they realized a strict clone would be “boring,” Robert says, “so in some ways it’s the opposite of my car.”

Since Robert’s coupe was black, the pair decided the new car would be a vintage Ford ivory color. And while the new car would also be Caddy powered, Robert and Mark decided to cover it with a hood. Otherwise the roof chop would be similar, as would the channel job. Robert even found another J.C. Whitney grille shell to put on this car, though by the time he was looking for the second one, word had gotten out about how well they fit channelled hot rods so the prices had gone up, as had their scarcity. He spent nearly two years hunting for one.

This car is gennie Ford steel too, a body he found back east via the Internet. It had been a hot rod but the roof hadn’t been

chopped, so Robert repeated the job as best he could. “It was hard to duplicate, even with my car right there.”

The Caddy engine, a ’52 model this time, was an amazing find: a crate motor that a Santa Paula farmer had bought to power a spraying rig. He passed away, and the engine sat in his barn. “The only way I found it was because I misspelled ‘Cadillac’ with one ‘l’ when I did the eBay search,” Robert remembers. “Back then eBay didn’t automatically fix spelling, so since the seller misspelled Cadillac too, the engine came up.”

Because the engine had been sitting for so long, Robert had Tom Branch freshen it before putting any speed parts on. He traded a flathead block to Marion Bledsoe for the Edelbrock intake, and mounted Stromberg 48s this time, as he’s had issues with the 97s not sending enough air and fuel to the thirsty Caddy in his black car. The white coupe also has a ’37 LaSalle transmission, overhauled by Julian at Four C’s.

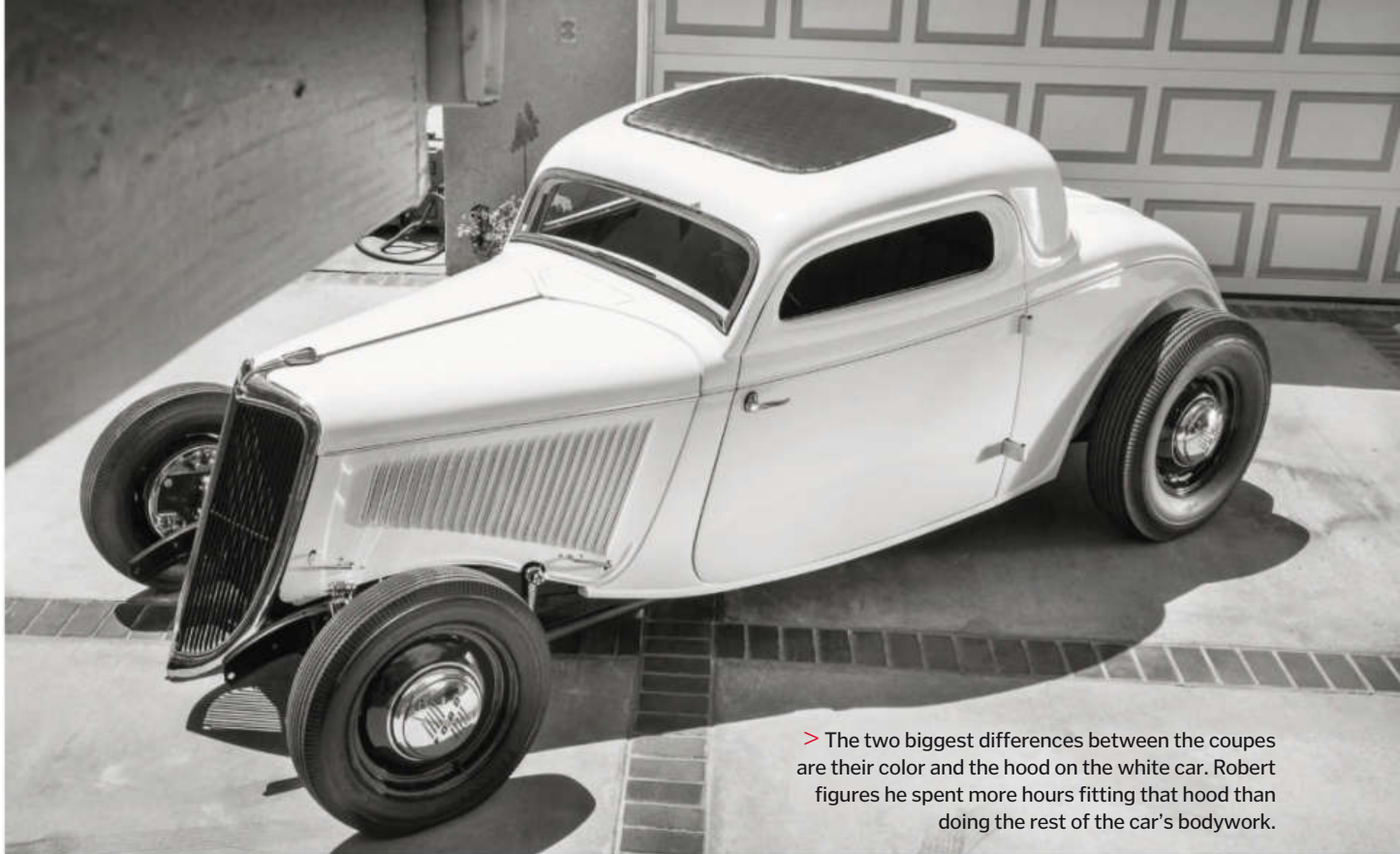
As much work as it took to chop and channel this car, Robert says it was even harder to get the hood to fit. “I have more hours in the hood than the whole damn car,” he laughs—now, anyway. It’s an original hood that he had to reshape in every direction. “On a channelled car the dimensions change on every corner—around the cowl, around the laid-back grille. It was worse than chopping.”

That kind of time-consuming handiwork, as well as time spent checking in with Mark about build details, caused the coupe’s construction to stretch for four years—twice as long as it took to build the first one. But the results are spectacular. And we couldn’t think of a better way to show off these not-quite-opposites than to evoke their period with rich black and white photography executed perfectly by Tim Sutton.

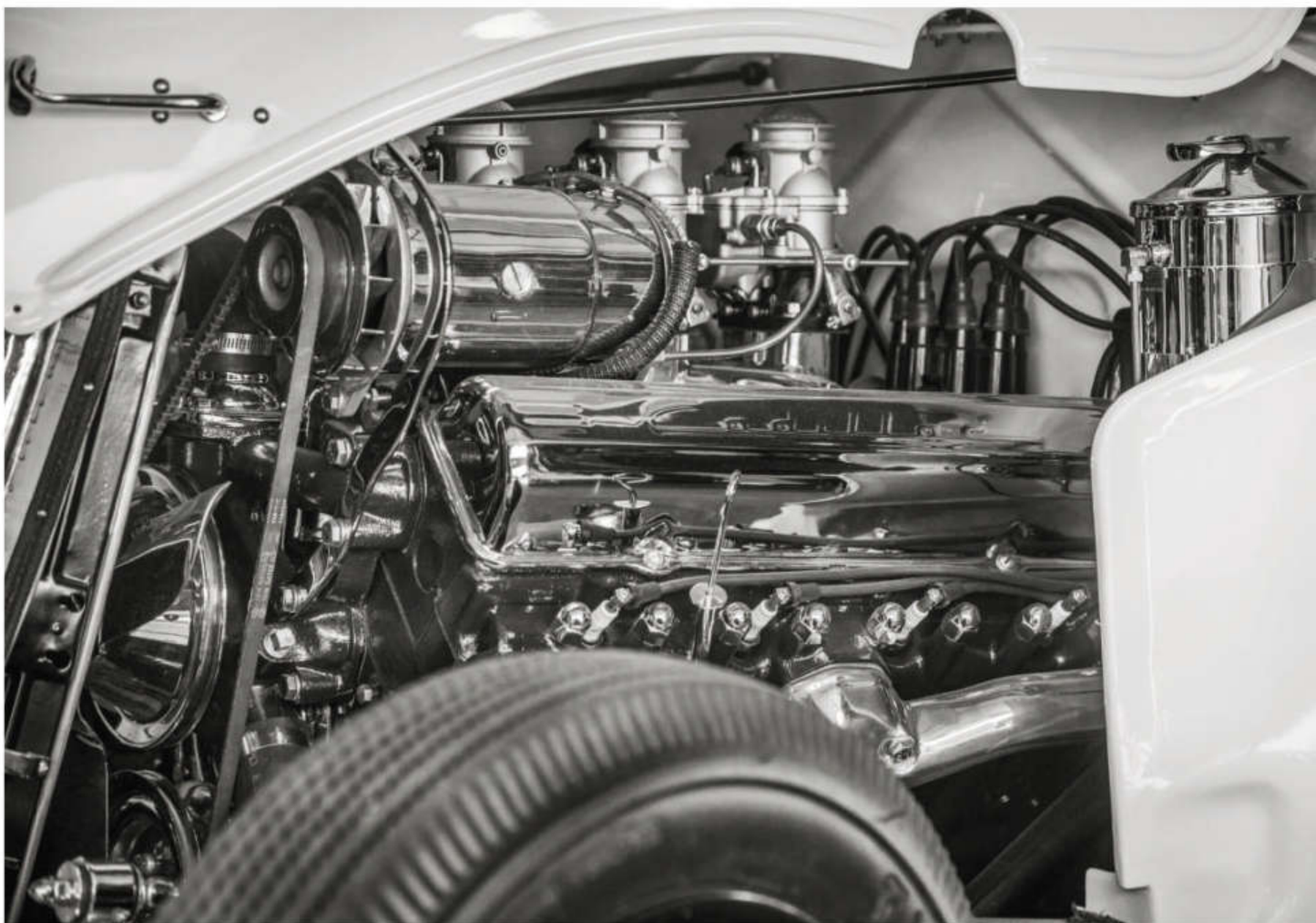
> The engine-turned gauge cluster, which Robert had in another car, is filled with Stewart-Warner wing gauges.

> When Robert finished the coupe, the first thing he did was drive it over to show Enmark. “He gave me a thumbs up, and when he did that, I knew I did good.”





> The two biggest differences between the coupes are their color and the hood on the white car. Robert figures he spent more hours fitting that hood than doing the rest of the car's bodywork.



> This car also runs a Caddy, but it's a '52 model that Robert found as a crate engine. He had Tom Branch freshen the motor before adding the speed parts since it had been sitting in a barn for years.



> Both coupes are fitted with similar front end components: Dropped '34 axles, split '36 Ford wishbones, '40 Ford juice brakes, '48 Ford truck steering, '40 Ford wheels. There's a little less bling on the white car, as the plate didn't go as well with the pale paint as it does against black.



> S-W gauges fill the instrument cluster out of a Jeep Willys truck—turned upside down so the gauges would taper up.



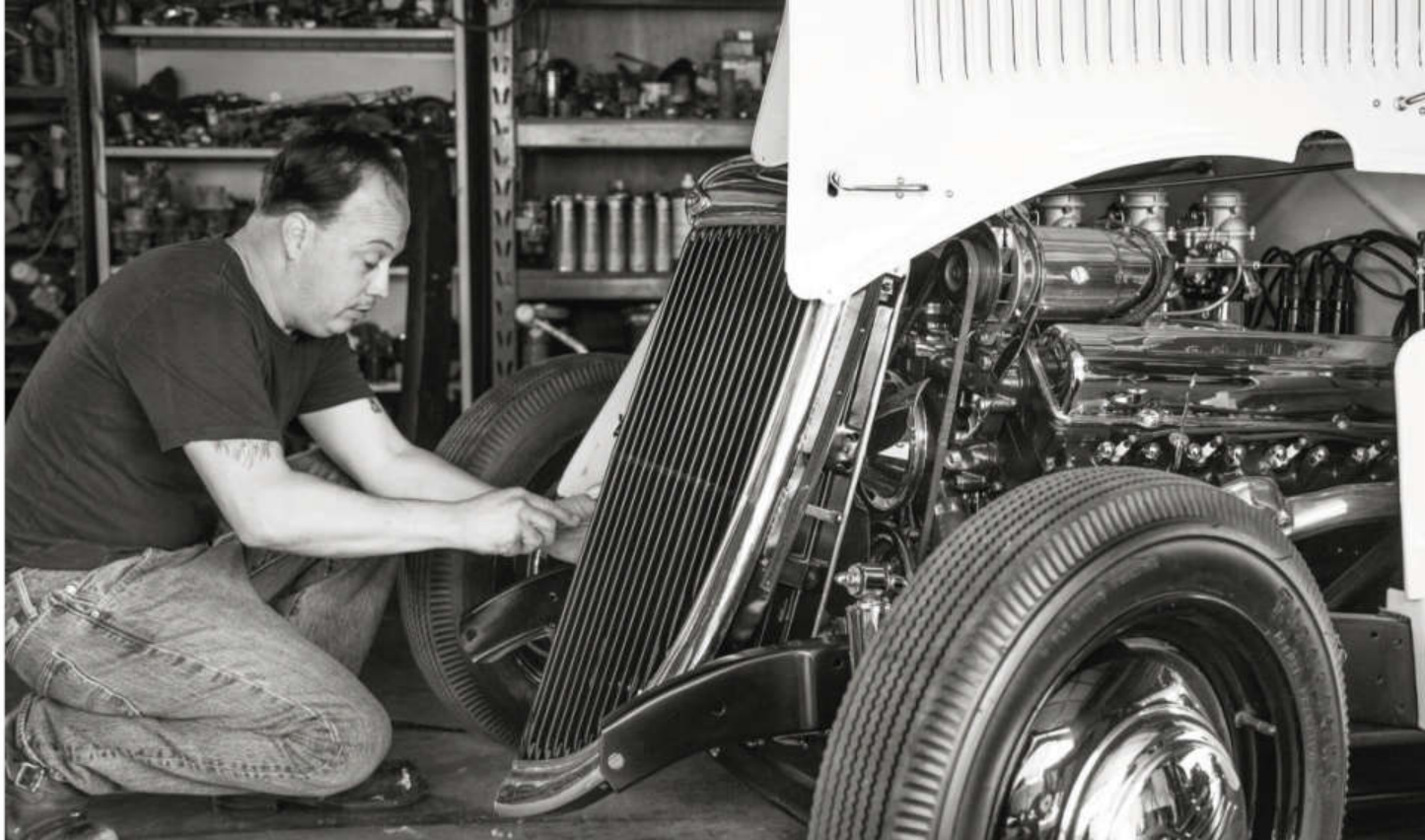
> This car, too, sports a '50s vintage J.C. Whitney aftermarket grille. But by the time he went looking for this one for the second car, word had spread about how well it fit channeled cars and so they were even harder to find. And it cost about the same as the real thing.



> Instead of fabricating a seat frame, this time Robert found a '34 Ford four-door front seat pan would work as the foundation for the bench seat. "Mark didn't want much upholstery, so I did everything detailed in black," says Robert.



> For both cars, Robert split a '36 Ford banjo axle to fit quick-change centersections. While the black car got a Halibrand, the white car received a Rodsville quick-change set up by The Hot Rod Works. Rear wheels are from a '48 Ford truck; these repop Firestones are from Coker.



> Robert did all the bodywork, built and finished the chassis, and laid on the paint on both coupes. The black car was painted in his garage, which didn't sit well with his neighbors. So Raul at Big Guys Auto Body in San Fernando generously loaned Robert his spray booth when it came time to paint the white car.



> Now that the white coupe is finished, Robert's next project is a '57 Chevy 150. "Yeah, my friends can't understand why I'm building a Chevy," he says. "But I just like old cars, period. I like the NASCAR look of the '50s, so I'm building it like that with early Corvette running gear."

> Robert also plans to resurrect his custom 1953 Ford, a car he's had since high school. It, too, runs a Cadillac engine, this time with a Hydramatic transmission. 📺



• WORDS AND
PICS: SCOTTY
LACHENAUER
• CAR: DON NICITA

FROM GLASS TO FIRST CLASS





UPGRADE

A few years back, hot rod-der Don Nicita

was loving life cruising to the local car shows in his fiberglass-bodied three-window Ford. Don had spent nearly a decade slowly but steadily working to get the car just the way he wanted and was finally enjoying the fruits of his labor. However, little by little Don was coming to the realization that the plastic Ford body was just not for him anymore. He really wanted some original Henry Ford steel to crown his beautifully built hot rod chassis. So Don kept his eye out for a genuine, steel, three-window coupe body.

One night, he drove his hot rod over to a local cruise-in, just a few miles from his home. Once there, he noticed a sweet '32 he had never seen before at the meet. He sidled up to the rod and checked it out thoroughly. With that, he then decided to look for the owner, which turned out to be an easier task than expected since there was only one man, a gentleman of about 80 years young, who he had never seen before at this particular cruise night.

He was right in his deduction. The man, longtime rodder Andy Buber, was the owner of the '32. Don got right down to brass tacks: He told Andy he was interested in purchasing a '32 steel body for his hot rod, and wondered if he knew of any for sale in the area. Though this '32 was not for sale, he did know of a local collector with several cars that fit that description, and thus offered Don a meeting with the third party.

Though that get-together didn't work out for Don, nice guy Andy let him check out his own personal stash of hot rods. The first car he showed him was a '36 five-window coupe. Andy mentioned that he bought it after the war—the Korean War! With more than 60 years together, there was an epic amount of history between man and machine.

But it was the next car that really grabbed Don's interest, a '33 coupe that Andy had owned for the better part of 45 years. Sadly, he was having issues driving it due to the canted design of the hot rod's floor.

Don looked over the '33 thoroughly. The Ford was in decent condition and looked like it had not seen much time on the road in the past few decades. Don figured that with a little elbow grease, the three-window could be a looker in no time flat.

Then Don decided to check out under the hood. Prepared to see a typical hot rod motor between the rails, he was surprised at what was actually powering this pre-war ride. Nestled up front between the rails was a complete 351 Cleveland. Andy told him the Ford powerplant was installed back in the early '70s after he purchased the remains of a then-late-model Mustang. It was not your typical choice of engine for an early Blue Oval, but to its credit the engine was in good condition, ran well, and had only 19,000 miles on the clock. Not only that, another bright spot was that it wasn't just another 302, or a Windsor. It was a Cleveland, which gave the '33 instant street cred.

Don was plenty interested and asked Andy if he would ever sell the car. There was a possibility; if Andy could find a '47 Ford that piqued his interest, he would offer the car to Don. Making sure they weren't wasting each other's time, they agreed on a price right there, though the '33 wasn't "really for sale"...yet.

Andy contacted Don a few days later and told him he had found a car of interest, and if the sale was approved, the '33 would be his for the agreed-upon price. Lucky for Don, the deal was consummated and the '33 was destined for Don's garage.

Don immediately spent the money necessary to get the '33 road-worthy. All fluids and belts were changed, and the ride height was fixed with a set of lowering blocks out back, to help even the rake (there was a 4-inch drop up front). A set of steelies and new tires were placed on the corners, and the old black lacquer was buffed out. A '33 seat was sourced to replace the '32 piece that came in the interior. With that, the car was roadworthy and ready to become a local head snapper.

> A deep black finish brings out the smooth lines of this beautiful '33 coupe. It's what drew in Don Nicita and made him want the car, even though it wasn't for sale, per se. Stance is a combination of a 4-inch drop up front, while 2-inch lowering blocks get the rear to sit just right with a light rake.



> In the early '70s, Andy bought the totaled carcass of a '71 Mustang and jacked its powerplant for the '33. Though not a typical means of motivation for your basic hot rod build, the 351 Cleveland is more than potent enough to propel the lightweight Ford down the road with some gas-driven gusto.

> A couple of modifications were made to the 351 to get it to fit in the Ford's engine bay. The exhaust manifold had to be cut and modified to fit. Since Andy was a skilled welder, the work executed is flawless.



The Coupe's History

Past owner Andy Buber was a skilled tradesman and a certified welder. He picked up the '33 after contacting someone about a '32 back in the late '60s. When the owner decided not to sell the Deuce, he received instead a lead on this '33. He purchased the car for \$400, a price that included the original frame. From its condition and the obvious modifications done to the body, he could tell it had been a race car, probably during the '50s. Among the interesting alterations that gave its race heritage away were the twin hydraulic cylinders mounted on the firewall, probably for the clutch and braking system used on early drag cars.

It had been run with Olds power and had an Olds rearend when he purchased it. The car also sat back on the frame, giving room for the big GM motor, which Don credits for saving the firewall from modification. A small alteration to the rumble seat floor had also been made to fit the Olds rear. It was quickly remedied and brought back to stock specifications by Andy.

The old-time hot rodder did all his own work on the car, including sandblasting, bodywork, and spraying on lacquer paint. Last but not least, he obtained an original grille for the newly rejuvenated '33 for the price of a case of beer. Those were the days....

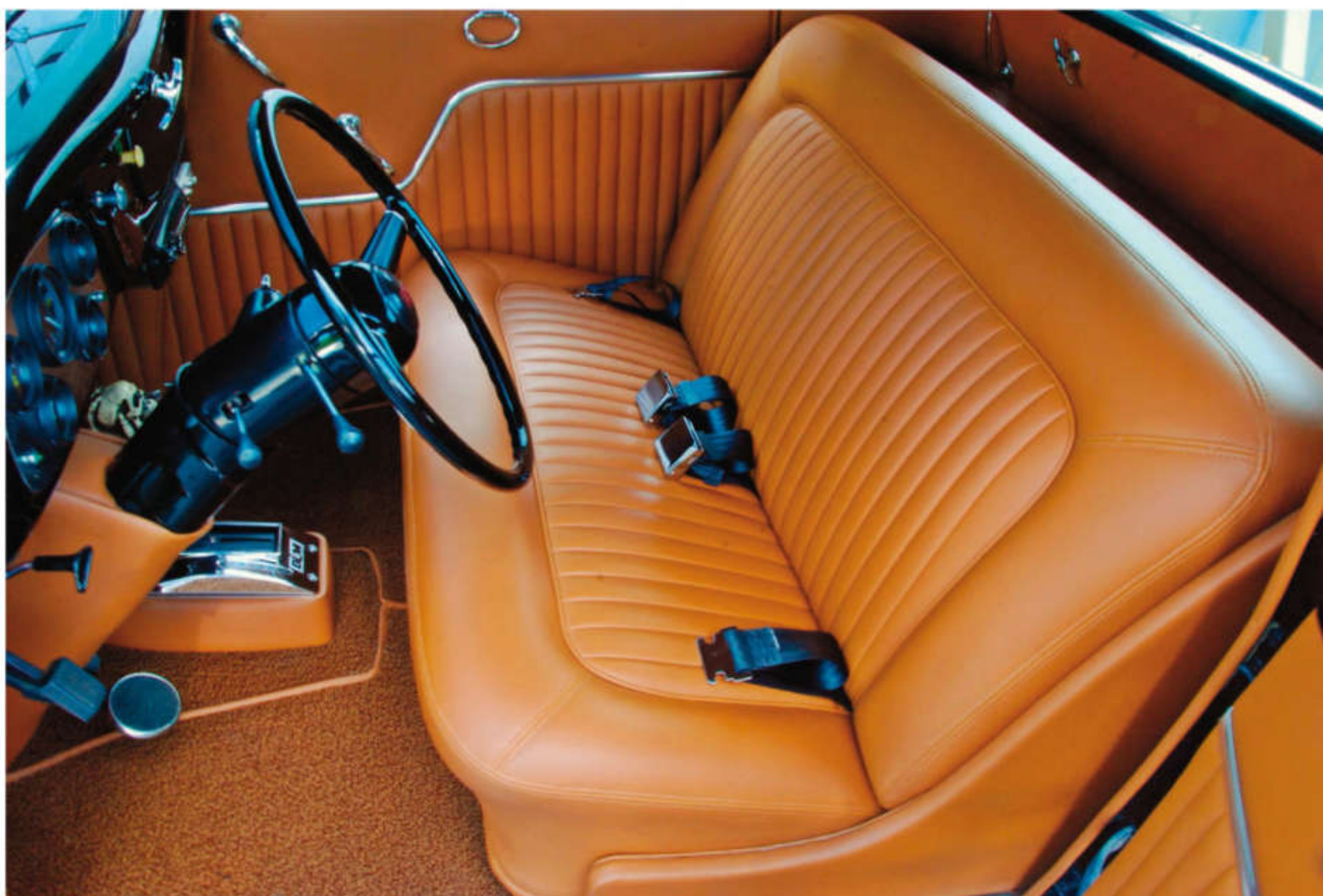


> The understated steel wheels match the hue of the hot rod's interior. It's a design cue Don came up with and executed nicely.



> When he first put together the hot rod, Andy was able to swap a case of beer for this gennie '33 grille. You'd need some pretty spendy suds to pull that off today.

> Andy also had to shorten the air cleaner snorkel to tuck it inside the hood panels.



> When Don bought the Ford, it had a '32 seat stuck in the cockpit. One of the first things he did was source a correct '33 bench seat for the car. The interior is covered in a beautiful genuine tuck 'n' roll for a true nostalgic look. One break from tradition is the wool carpet, sourced from Mercedes-Benz.

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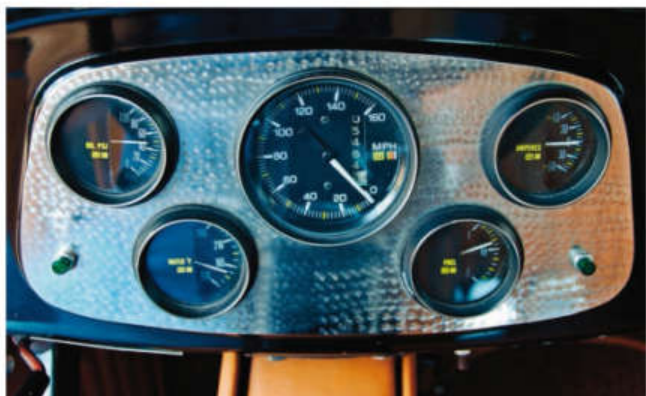
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Restoration

Don drove the coupe for about six months before deciding he wanted to make it show worthy. He knew it needed a restoration to get it cosmetically to where he felt it should be. So the hot rod was torn down and stripped to the metal. It was then that two small patches in the car's quarters, done by Andy, were uncovered. Since



> Period Stewart-Warner gauges grace the dash. Some parts of the Mustang live on in the interior, including the gas pedal and emergency brake.

they were executed perfectly, they were left alone. No other major surgery was needed to get the body up to snuff, as it had spotless original floors and was 100 percent rust free. So to finish it off, a skin of DuPont two-stage urethane was laid out on the '33's flanks by master bodyman Dennis Brizak of Monroe Township, New Jersey. The brilliant black looks a mile thick on the Ford.

Under the hood, Don decided to keep the Cleveland since it was part of the car's history. It also made Don's '33 stand out in a crowd of flatheads and Hemi-powered rods. The 351 was sent out to Select Automotive in Milltown, New Jersey, where Norm Carina detailed it to '71 specs. It was then that the rebuilder pointed out a few alterations Andy had made to the air cleaner and exhaust manifold so the Cleveland could fit under the '33's snug hood.

The interior also received a makeover. Don laid out a design that was brought to life by Everlast Auto Interiors in Linden, New Jersey, a family-run business that's been sewing hot rod interiors since 1946. The seat was done over in original tuck 'n' roll (not rolls and pleats), with 1¼-inch-wide rolls between stitching. This design was continued out to the rumble seat as well. The rug was made out of a bolt of Mercedes-Benz wool loop carpeting imported directly from Germany.

Besides the aesthetic changes, the car was kept as original to the previous build as possible. The period Stewart-Warner gauges



> Don's restoration was purely cosmetic. He kept the original parts that previous owner Andy Buber installed, and continued his vision of what the '33 should be into this final build.

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were kept in the dash to help monitor the Mustang powerplant. The B&M shifter Andy installed helps get the '33 into gear. Suspension was kept as close to Andy's wishes as possible, with just minor upgrades. The 4-inch drop axle was kept, along with the 2-inch lowering blocks Don installed to keep the ride height right where he wanted it.

Don understood from the start that some changes hot rods go through over the years are important to the ongoing history of the car. Many purists might have pulled the mighty Mustang motor out and replaced it with something more traditional, or even upgraded the performance factor. But Don was wise to keep with the timeline of the car, and help keep the history intact. Today, the '33 stands out amongst its Blue Oval brethren: a beautiful, sleek, understated three-window with a big Blue Oval surprise under the hood.




> Andy Buber poses with the '33 on the day he sold it to Don Nicita, ending 45 years of ownership.



"The history of the '33 is important to me. I made sure to make just cosmetic improvements to the original build. I worked to retain the way the car looked when it was built over 40 years ago."

—Don Nicita

> Don's car had a history of drag racing back in the '50s and was run with an Olds motor and rearend. The body sat back on the frame, and because of that, the metal section under the rumble seat had to be modified to fit the GM differential. 

POWER STRUGGLES

PART 1

- WORDS: DAVE WALLACE
- PICS: PETERSEN PUBLISHING CO. ARCHIVE
- RESEARCH HELP: THOMAS VOEHRINGER AND RYAN ONO



1955. You regular readers have heard every editor since 2008 make the claim that HOT ROD Deluxe's photo-heavy historical sections have hardly dented the film archive compiled by Petersen Publishing Co. Not only that, it's still possible to tell the story of any racing season either entirely or mostly with worthy outtakes not printed in magazines at the time, or since. We'll prove it again by prioritizing unpublished outtakes to illustrate a full year in each issue, starting here.

What's different about this season-by-season series is an expanded scope, restricted neither to a single motorsport (as in "The Golden Age of Drag Racing") nor to one staff photographer ("A Year in the Life of Eric Rickman"). We're opening up Power Struggles to all forms of motorsports photographed for Petersen publications between March 1955 (when the company started storing its negatives) and the late 1960s (when racing started sucking). We're admittedly biased toward straight-line contests.

Nevertheless, some stockers, champ cars, and one special Porsche have already penetrated that prejudice, with others sure to follow as we delve ever deeper into hundreds of thousands of archived black-and-white exposures.

We also love losers. Rather than run or rerun the familiar, highly successful cars and drivers who are now easily searchable online, we're suckers for overlooked nonqualifiers, "first-round runners-up," and the mechanically misfortunate—particularly those whose failed experiments were captured on Petersen-issued film.

Our series title reflects all racers' common struggle to build and apply horsepower better than whomever's in the next lane, or rearview mirror, or record book. Mechanical approaches of the '50s and '60s were as different and intriguing as today's "spec" machines are cookie-cutter boring. Power Struggles celebrates those individual struggles—whether successful or merely spectacular—that collectively produced the golden age of American auto racing.

> Sixty-nine drivers struggled for space as Darlington's seventh Southern 500 got under way with NASCAR's traditional rolling start. Studebakers, Plymouths, Buicks, Dodges, Fords, Hudsons, Cadillacs, Pontiacs, Chryslers, Oldsmobiles, and one lonely Nash entered, but Chevrolet's new 265-inch, 195hp V-8 dominated. Twenty-four '55 Chevys started. Seven finished in the top 10, including Smokey Yunick's victorious Bel Air, driven by Herb Thomas. Those heavy Chrysler 300s are right up front because Carl Kiekhaefer's drivers paced qualifying: Fonty Flock averaged 112.781 mph, while brother Tim hit 112.041. "These times are remarkable," noted *Motor Trend* (Nov. '55), "when one considers that the track record in a championship car is held by Bob Sweikert at 132.289 mph."

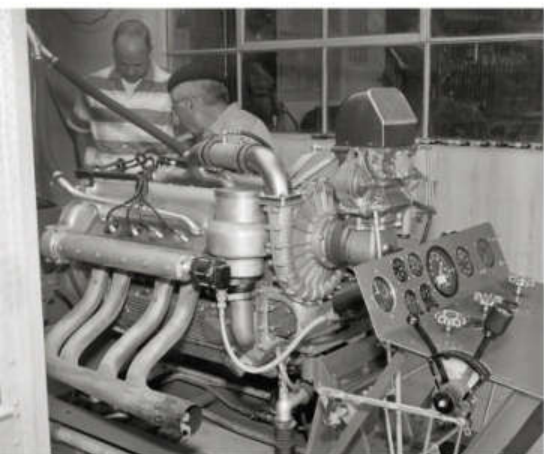
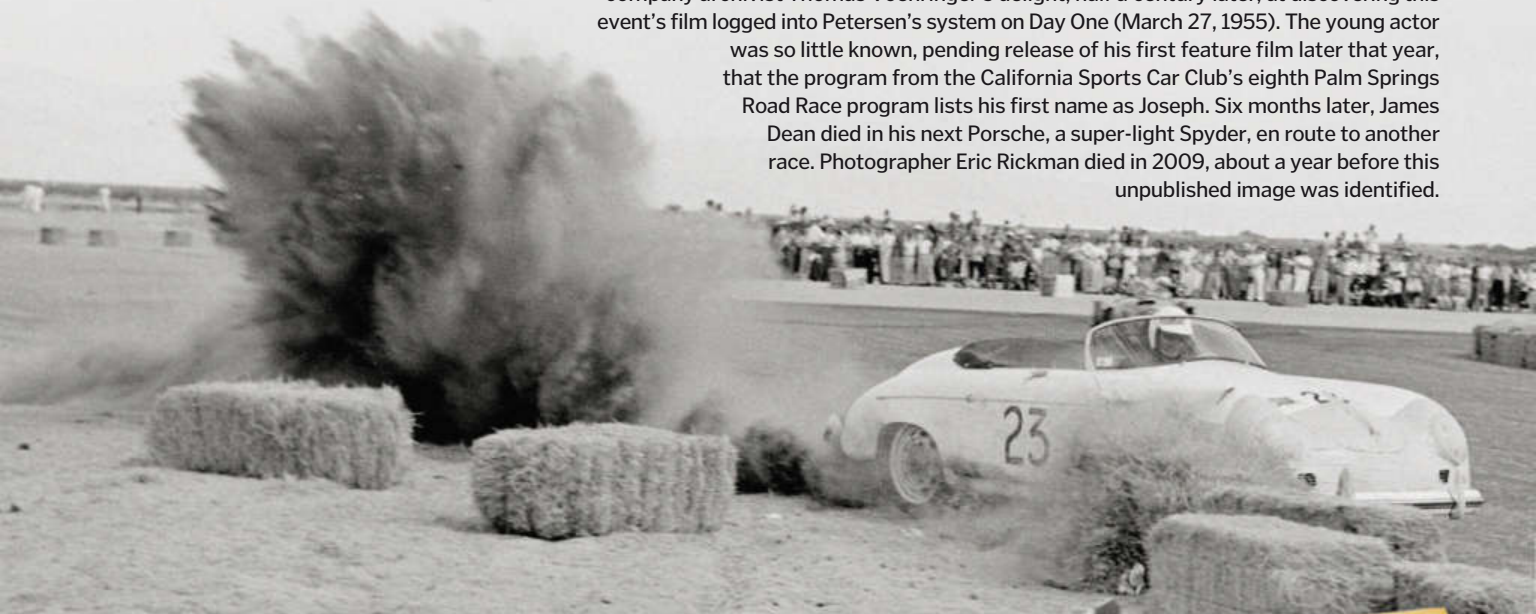


> Ouch, that hurts! The facial expressions captured by HOT ROD's Eric Rickman are priceless. Colton (California) Drag Strip's starter, Ron Burdette, did the dirty deed. Our favorite photo from NHRA's season opener evidently did not impress editor Wally Parks, who chose nine different shots in event coverage (Aug. '55 HRM).

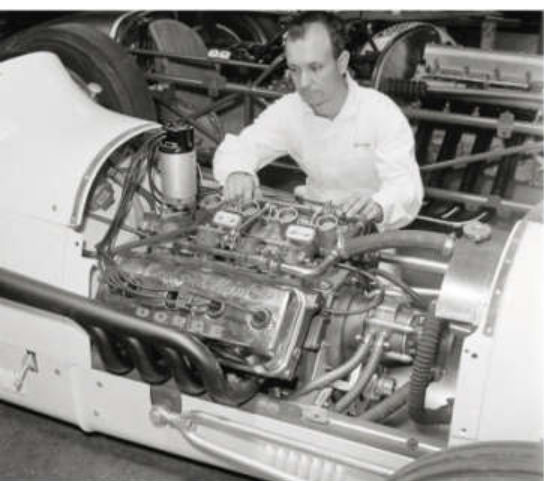


PIC: AL KIDD

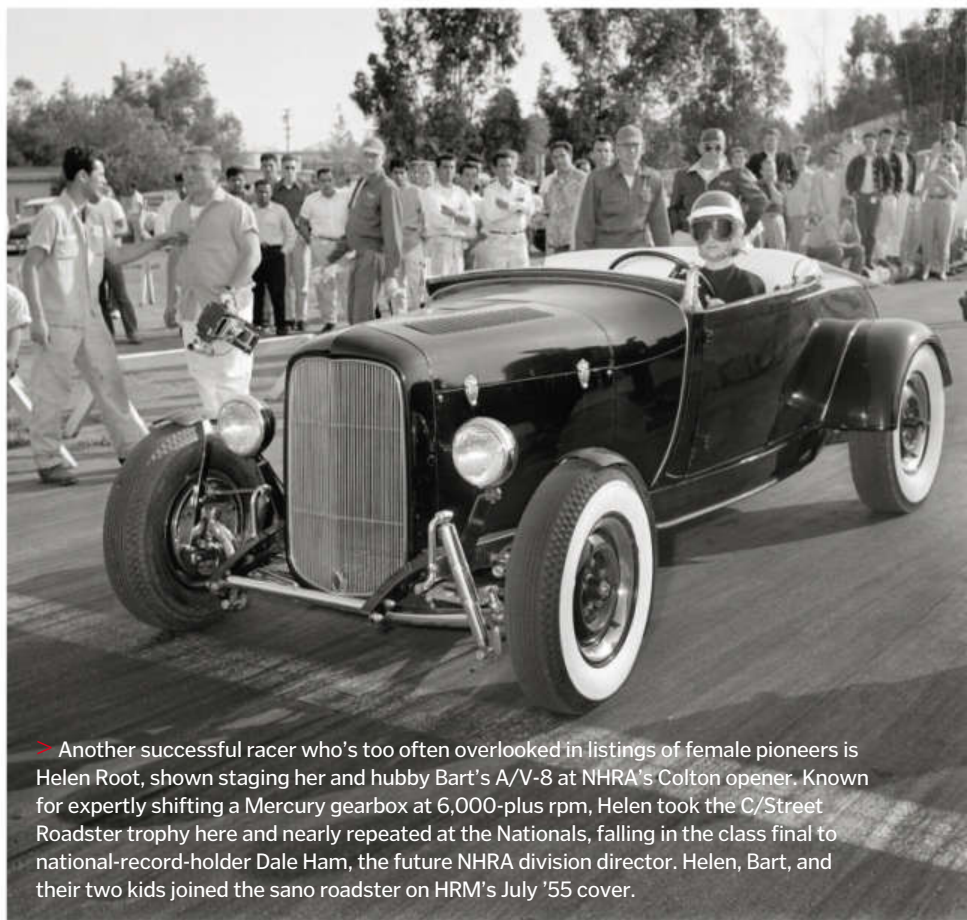
> Few action pictures exist from this kid's brief, promising, road-racing career, so imagine company archivist Thomas Voehringer's delight, half a century later, at discovering this event's film logged into Petersen's system on Day One (March 27, 1955). The young actor was so little known, pending release of his first feature film later that year, that the program from the California Sports Car Club's eighth Palm Springs Road Race program lists his first name as Joseph. Six months later, James Dean died in his next Porsche, a super-light Spyder, en route to another race. Photographer Eric Rickman died in 2009, about a year before this unpublished image was identified.



> Here's an outtake of a shot from the same angle that HRM published (June '55). We like this one better because Technical Editor Ray Brock (left) and mechanic Jean Marcenac are behind the dyno, instead of obscuring its cool control panel. More than 600 hp was generated by the 183ci, Holley-carbed, supercharged Novi V-8 that Troy Ruttman ran at Indy.



> Tony Capanna was charged with replacing the Offy in Jim Bryan's AAA-champion Dean Van Line Special with this Red Ram Hemi. *Motor Trend's* Indy 500 coverage (Aug. '55) called the stock-block entry "unmistakably the people's choice" during qualifying, until a spinout spoiled Bryan's final attempt.



> Another successful racer who's too often overlooked in listings of female pioneers is Helen Root, shown staging her and hubby Bart's A/V-8 at NHRA's Colton opener. Known for expertly shifting a Mercury gearbox at 6,000-plus rpm, Helen took the C/Street Roadster trophy here and nearly repeated at the Nationals, falling in the class final to national-record-holder Dale Ham, the future NHRA division director. Helen, Bart, and their two kids joined the sano roadster on HRM's July '55 cover.



> HRM printed only the “before” image in (Aug. '55) coverage from NHRA's Redding, California, meet. The caption read, in full: “After setting top time of 121.78, LeBlanc dragster spun out, folded like paper bag. Belt, helmet, roll bar protected driver.” Even the painted face looks spooky.



> Wally Parks was uncharacteristically frisky in Denver's winner's circle. As the presenter of a trophy inscribed “Trophy Queen, NHRA Regional Drags, 1955,” he enthusiastically reversed roles with recipient Mary Saunders and issued the congratulatory kiss. After his body-crushing lip lock, the NHRA president, HOT ROD editor, and Petersen editorial director returned to form—except for what appears to be a lipstick moustache.



> This might be Rick's shakiest shot all season, for obvious reasons. Jack Moss got straightened out in time to drive around him and take Top Eliminator in Denver, hitting 120.00 mph with 258 inches of Red Ram Hemi.

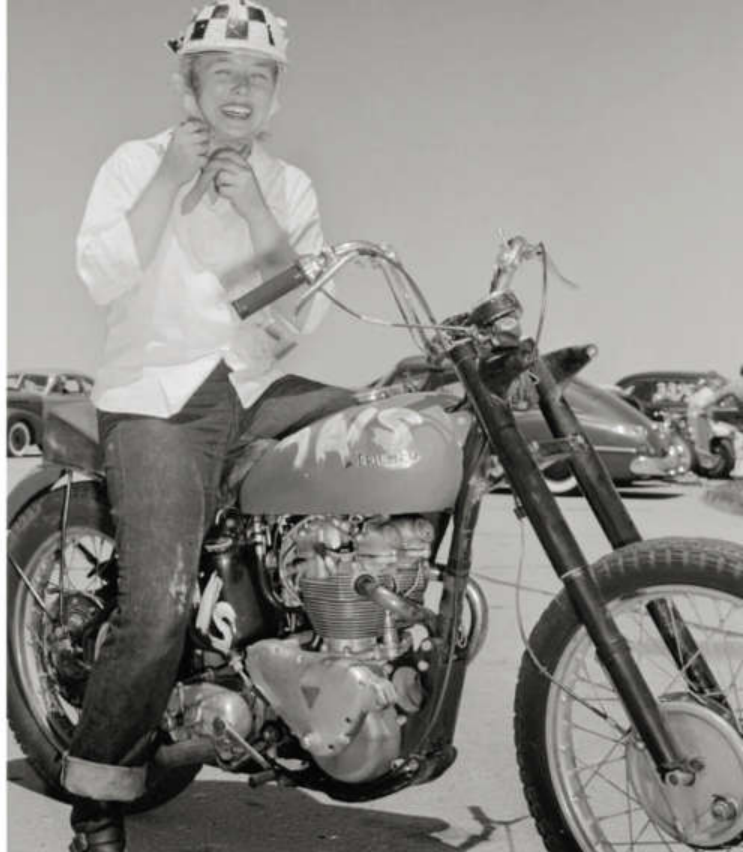


> “Some cars fail to pass technical inspection,” read the caption in HRM's Oct. '55 coverage of the Safari's Sioux City stop. “This one remained on side lines.”





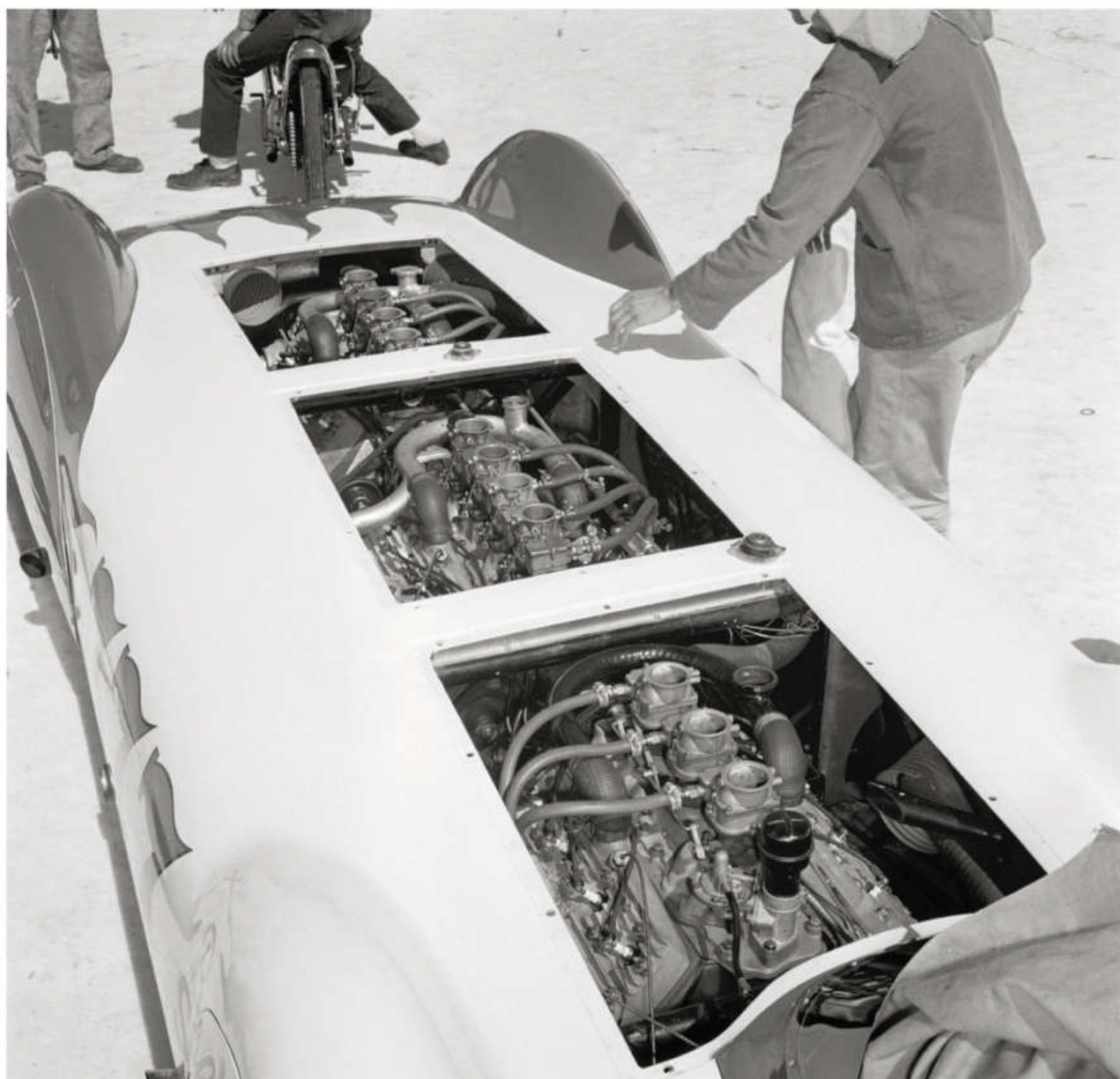
> This poor fella couldn't win for losin'. The clutch explosion at Kansas City's NHRA meet ended any chance of a trophy. Worse, metal pieces pierced the roof, cowl, hood, and fenders, along with his left leg and right wrist. Finally, HOT ROD added insult to injury by printing four photos under the headline "Beware of Shrapnel" (Oct. '55), without naming the victim who gamely posed for Rickman. These are unpublished outtakes from the same roll of film. We can't see enough of the cropped, chopped coupe to positively identify a make and model, but we're sure that some of you smart folks will recognize the dash and respond.



> The blonde we spotted in HRM's Oct. '55 group shot of Sioux City trophy winners inspired a search that led to this unpublished close-up of Cavalier Motorcycle Club member Sunny Marshall of Omaha, Nebraska. Her 30ci Triumph topped the two-wheeled A/Stock class.



> Sorry, we know nothing about the couple or smooth '40, but these kids in Orange, Massachusetts, have waited long enough to see themselves in print. (Sixty years ago, this would've made a killer ad for stylish socks.)

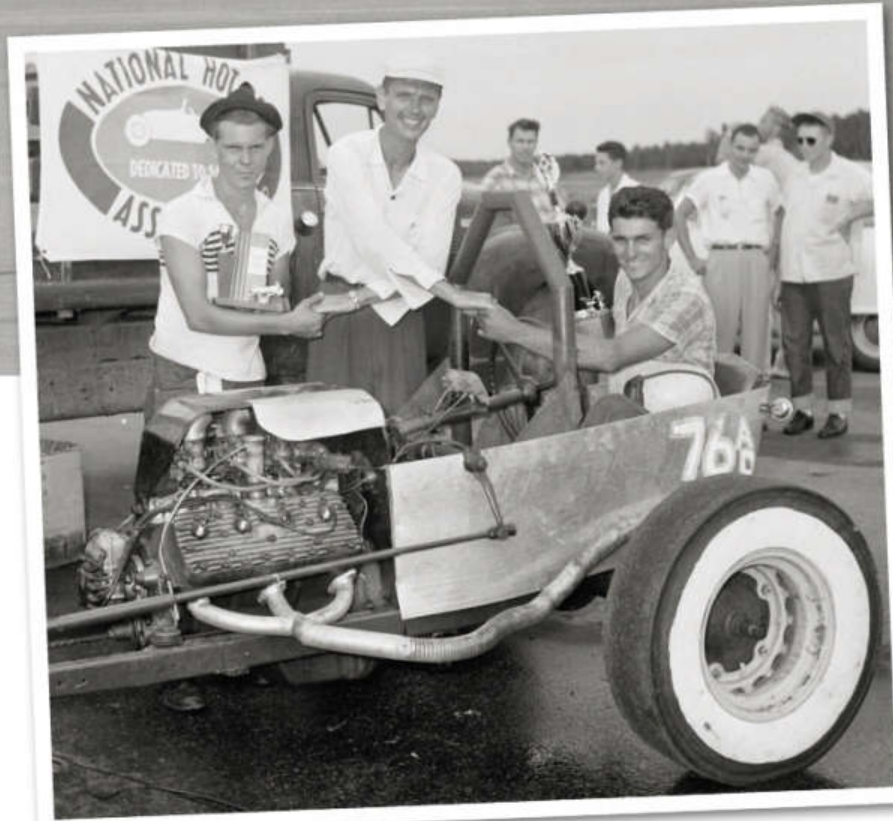


> At Bonneville, three flatheads (885 cumulative cubes) and two driven axles pulled Roy Leslie to opening day's best speed of 234 mph. Reoccurring clutch failures trailed the Kenz & Leslie streamliner (which would become America's fastest car in 1957

at 270.473). The coolest, and presumably fastest, push car of this seventh Speed Week was the Denver team's drag/lakes roadster, powered by a Y-block.



> Winning NHRA's Florida regional earned Don Garlits his first national ink, but no photo. HRM's coverage is notable for harsh criticism, probably penned by editor Parks, of the hosting Lake City Airport: "Facilities, arrangements, and cooperation were below par."



RESULTS

CLASS	ENTRY	M.P.H.	BODY & ENGINE
STOCK CLASS			
"A"	Dald Snyder Paulsboro, N.J.	84.03	'55 Chev
"B"	E. T. Lankford Jacksonville, Fla.	75.00	'55 Chev
"C"	R. F. Hamlett Brunswick, Ga.	75.44	'52 Olds
"D"	James Bierly St. Petersburg, Fla.	63.55	'50 Lincoln
GAS COUPE/SEDAN			
"A"	Hoyt Grimes Atlanta, Ga.	87.00	'40 Ford
"B"	Tam Kempton Atlanta, Ga.	85.63	'33 Ford coupe
"C"	Joe DeBellis Miami, Fla.	84.11	'49 Olds
"D"	Frank Wurtz Paulsboro, N.J.	81.51	'55 Merc
ALTERED COUPE/SEDAN			
"A"	Frank Wurtz Paulsboro, N.J.	93.26	'32 Ford-Merc
"B"	Omar Allen Savannah, Ga.	98.90	'33 Dodge-Chrysler
STREET ROADSTER			
"C"	Ed Knobel Jacksonville, Fla.	78.28	'50 Jeepster Ford
ROADSTER			
"A"	Harry Caldwell Miami, Fla.	98.68	'32 Ford
"B"	Jerry McCoy Lake Worth, Fla.	95.54	'28 Ford-Olds
OPEN GAS			
	Joe M. Travis Ft. Myers, Fla.	108.56	dragster-Olds
FUEL COUPE/SEDAN			
"B"	Lowe Bros. Spec. Atlanta, Ga.	85.22	'38 Chev coupe-GMC
MODIFIED ROADSTERS			
"A"	Michael Kleinman Clearwater, Fla.	82.94	'32 Ford-DeSoto
"B"	Lawrence R. Daiss Jr. Savannah, Ga.	78.80	'31 Ford
DRAGSTER			
	Don Garlits Tampa, Fla.	106.88	dragster-Merc
SPORTS CARS			
"A"	Calvin Partin Bronson, Fla.	80.86	Thunderbird
Fastest time of the day—W. D. Roberson—dragster—108.69			
Top Eliminator—Don Garlits—dragster—108.17			



> Arden Mounts lost his race car at Darlington, but NASCAR won years of priceless publicity. Movie film that surfaced of the Hudson smashing into a stalled car aired repeatedly on sports-highlight shows worldwide.



> “This method prevents accidental loss of the tailpipe during race,” explained MT’s Darlington coverage (Nov. ’55). Excessive tire wear plagued the heavy Kiekhaefer Chryslers. Tim Flock finished third here, despite numerous pit stops, but won a record 18 of 45 Grand National events and the ’55 NASCAR championship.



> Look who we discovered in film of NHRA’s San Antonio stop: A.J. Foyt! The overeager youngster set overall top speed of 121.75 in Ray Harrelson’s wing tank before a red-flag loss in the Dragster-class final.

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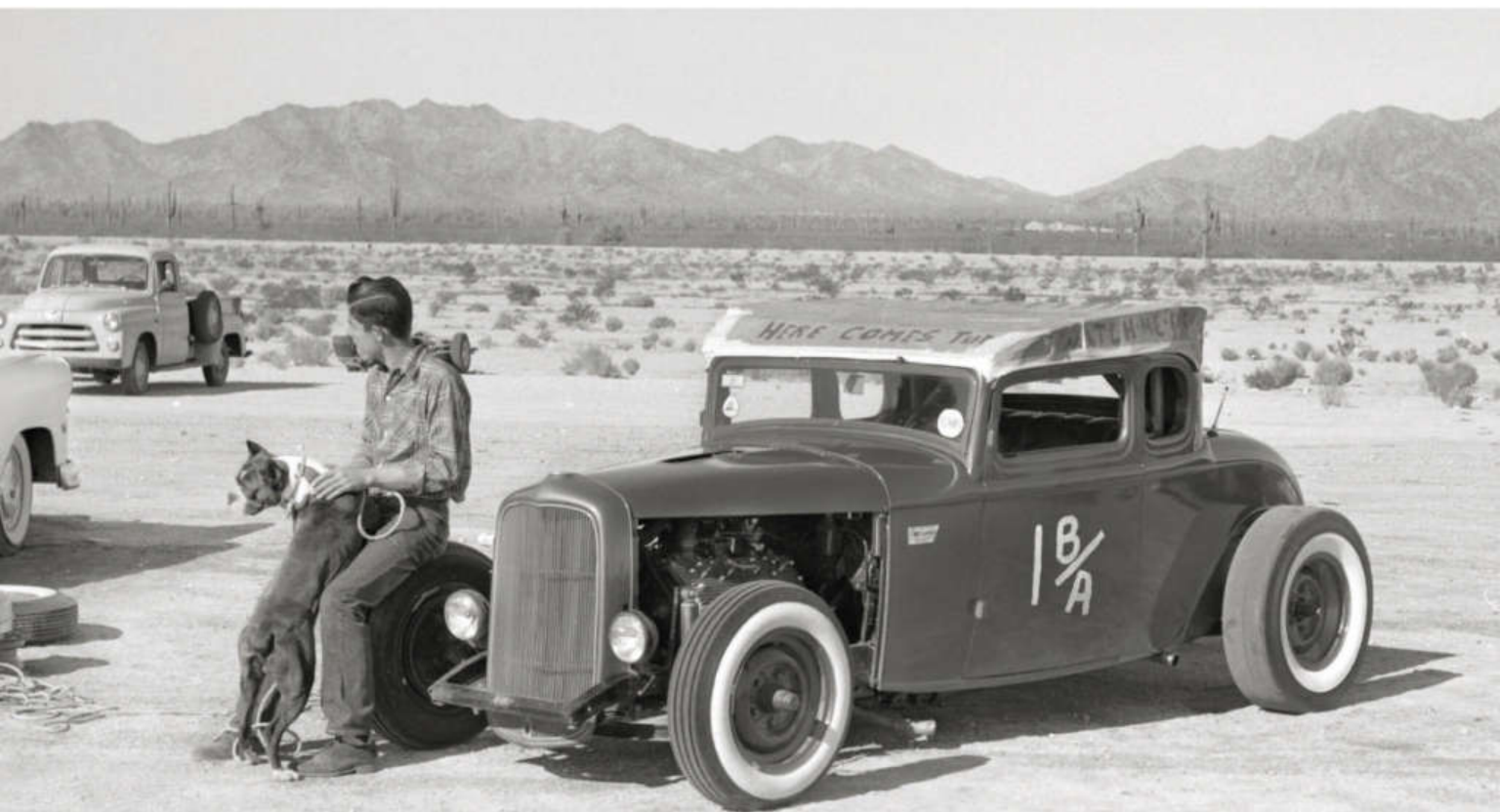
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> The engineering marvel nicknamed “Bustle Bomb” came into the inaugural Nationals as drag racing’s fastest car (147.05 mph, Santa Ana) and left Great Bend, Kansas, the same way—only faster. Before rain halted dragster racing, Lloyd Scott turned overall top speed of 151.00, a new NHRA record, plus low e.t. of 10.48 seconds. Scott and co-builder George Smith used a 348ci Olds and ‘48 Ford gearbox up front to get the mass moving. Two seconds after blast-off, a hydraulic timer automatically fired the rear-mounted 391ci Cad for extra shove, without wheelspin. (Platinum-level members of the Hot Rod Club can click into the Oct. ‘55 issue for five pages of technical details and Dean Moon photos.)



> After everything that went wrong in Great Bend, it’s a wonder there ever was a second-annual NHRA Nationals (let alone the 61st, this year). The fledgling organization’s first four-day program got off to a bumpy start, literally, then turned into a two-month ordeal. *Drag News* (but not HRM) mentioned multiple bumps and “one particularly severe dip” responsible for blown engines, transmissions, and rearends on Friday. “When Calvin Rice cleared all four wheels coming out of the dip Friday in the ‘Riley Special’ dragster, runs were discontinued [and] ... that evening a quick asphalt fill of the dip was made by a local paving crew.” Rain started falling the next afternoon, and never stopped. Remaining Top Eliminator and Dragster-class racing was postponed to the last regional meet, two months away in Arizona. Advertised “two-way record runs,” a holdover from president Parks’ dry-lakes roots, never materialized, in either place. The Safari foursome and other NHRA officials miraculously managed to run off all lower classes on Saturday. The A/Competition Coupe/Sedan trophy went home to L.A. in the California-style F100 pulling “Jazzy” Jim Nelson’s Fiat. Six decades later, womenfolk who attended the wet Kansas weekend probably have, uh, strong memories of the facilities. Enlarged, the sign on the distant outhouse reads “women.”



> My, how the scenery changed from the beginning to the end of NHRA’s first (also longest-ever) national event. The Nationals finally concluded in late November in Perryville, Arizona. Dean Turk’s tough coupe was too chopped for B/Altered and failed tech, initially. “Tut” then raised the roof to legal height—with cardboard boxes! We like this outtake way better than a different pit photo picked for the Feb. ‘56 HRM, sans mountains and doggie.

**"We'll all be gone for the summer
We're on surfari to stay,"**
—Brian Wilson, "Surfin' USA"

You may already be familiar with the story of NHRA's Drag (1954) and Safety ('55-'56) Safaris, but we can't wrap up this season without honoring their long-term impact on the entire sport of drag racing, even beyond the obvious benefits to Wally Parks' struggling, underfunded organization (which operated out of Robert Petersen's Trend Publications building). By teaching car clubs how to effectively organize, publicize, and safely conduct competition, Safari personnel inadvertently created future competition for NHRA itself. That education inspired some local entrepreneurs to independently open facilities that may or may not accept NHRA rules and sanction fees. In 1955, Wally's four missionaries traveled 20,000 pre-Interstate miles to conduct 18 "Regional Championship" meets on airport runways, old highways, and at least one dirt road. They arrived in Kansas City on the Monday of race week to find that paving had



> Socony Mobil Oil Co.'s critical sponsorship fed high-test Mobilgas (30.9 cents on this bright New England day) into the team's Plymouth wagon, no charge, and fed lunch to local dignitaries when the rig rolled into town. Wally Parks credited this support for the Safari's survival. Later, he would blame the late cancellation of a fourth tour on Mobil's sudden withdrawal after drag racing came under fire from influential safety and law-enforcement agencies (as we'll see in coming installments).

only just begun. For the next five days and nights, the Safari team supervised 'round-the-clock construction. That weekend, 197 entries made more than 800 runs in front of several thousand spectators.



> Eric Rickman often remarked that because he worked for HOT ROD, which made money, instead of NHRA, which did not, "I could have steak every night, while the other guys ate hamburger." Tonight, though, it looks like TV dinners all around for (left to right) Bud Coons, Rick, Chic Cannon, and Bud Evans. Cannon, the sole survivor, is writing a book about his experiences.



> A small, single-axle travel trailer—which can be still be seen today at Heritage Series nostalgia meets and in front of NHRA's wonderful Wally Parks Motorsports Museum, adjacent to Pomona Raceway—carried everything needed to set up and operate a quarter-mile track, including miles of wire for timing and PA systems.



> Bud Coons' law-enforcement background legitimized the arriving hot rodders to skeptical government and media leaders. Nearly every archive negative of Safari appearances away from a dragstrip shows Coons patiently explaining NHRA's mission to cops, racers, politicians, news reporters, or citizens.



> In late June, Rick seems to have lost some enthusiasm for nonstop travel between consecutive race weekends. The other 11 frames on this roll place the motel somewhere near the site of NHRA's Pocatello, Idaho, event. 📺



> Emptied of track equipment and personal luggage, the trailer was converted into a command center. Car-club volunteers kept the races running under close Safari supervision. Shown awaiting instruction in San Antonio are members of the Powder Puff Bandits girls' club.



• WORDS: DICK MARTIN
• PICS: THE SKIP HEDRICH COLLECTION

BRICKYARD DREAMS, SALT FLAT MEMORIES:



THE SKIP HEDRICH STORY

INDY. If you were glued to the radio on May 30, 1964, you were likely listening to broadcaster Sid Collins skillfully paint word pictures of The Greatest Spectacle in Racing for a hundred million listeners worldwide. Many of us wondered what it would be like to be at the Brickyard, not as onlookers but driving in the Indy 500 or involved turning wrenches for one of the teams. Indy was a very big deal back then.

Skip Hedrich didn't wonder. He raced Midgets and Sprint Cars, focused on the day he would compete in the 500. While that dream was dashed by an injury, his talent as a skilled fabricator put him in great demand in Gasoline Alley.

Ultimately, it was Bonneville that got Skip back in his shop, building a creation so striking in beauty and speed, it takes one's breath away.

But we're getting ahead of ourselves.

Born in 1935 in Vista, California, Skip Hedrich grew up in Altadena, just up the hill from Blair's Auto Parts in Pasadena. Skip's father, Otto, was a mechanical engineer who designed the steam power plants in Glendale and Burbank during WWII, where power was essential for the aircraft plants in the area.

A friend of Skip's brother Holly (who later became publisher of HOT ROD magazine) had a Deuce roadster that he had taken the body off of. A pre-teen Skip got the chassis for 20 bucks. When his dad asked him what he was going to do with it, Skip said he was going to build a roadster out of it. He learned how to braze up the many holes in the frame using his dad's Prest-O-Lite acetylene torch.

Skip had been eyeing a '29 Model A body that had been sitting at Blair's quite a while. Skip had built up a rapport with Don Blair



> Skip bought an historic Model T hot rod in 1953 and set about fixing what had been broken over the years, including the crumpled track nose that had been formed by Frank Kurtis. Lying against each wheel are the plug and the mold he made to form the car's new fiberglass nose. Kurtis Kraft was in the business of building Championship cars by that time, and having a duplicate nose made from aluminum was out of his price range.

and Blair's dad, and they sold the body to him for \$20. It then took Skip three years of sanding and filling to finish it. Skip used his mom's vacuum to paint the body when he was 11.

Though the body was painted, Skip couldn't muster up enough money to finish the engine, which was in pieces. His paper route money would only allow him to build the flathead bit by bit. Skip would pay for half a set of lifters one month and the other half the next.

His friend, the late Larry Burford, saw the scattered flathead parts on the garage floor. "We're leaving for Bonneville next week," Burford said. "You'll never get the motor done in time." That was in 1951.

Larry called Skip three days later saying a guy had loaned him a '29 Ford coupe on Deuce rails to run at Bonneville and asked Skip to go to Speed Week with him. "I told Larry the roadster was together and I was ready to go, but instead four other guys and I spent 20 hours a day getting the coupe ready, and I left the roadster at home."

First Bonneville Adventure

In the late '40s and early '50s, it was an adventure to just make it from Southern California to Wendover. "We left for Bonneville at night to beat the heat towing my dad's trailer behind Hambone's [Don Hambrick's] '46 Ford two-door with a couple of drums of alcohol and a couple of 5-gallon cans of nitro," Skip remembers. "Jack Schmidt drove his mom's new '51 Ford convertible. Larry Burford rode with Jack, and they flat towed the coupe."

They got as far as Lone Pine before Jack fell asleep. "We went up an embankment. I was asleep in the back seat when I saw the drums rolling out on the road with sparks coming off them, but they didn't catch fire. We pushed the drums to the side of the road and found some milk cans at one of the ranches, rinsed them out, went back, and put the nitro and what fuel we could salvage in the back of Jack's trunk. The hitch to my dad's trailer was twisted off, so we pushed the trailer under some bushes and left it." On the way back Skip got a hitch, found his dad's trailer, and towed it home.

"We were pulling a steep grade going to Tonopah, Nevada, elevation 6,047 feet, and Hambone's '46 boiled over. So we poured the fuel out of the coupe and put in some gas, fired it up, and helped with pushing the car over the hill with the tow bar. It took us two days to get to Bonneville."

When they finally did arrive, "I was wondering if I was on the same planet. I never envisioned anything like the whiteness of the place."

Skip's roadster shows up in the 1951 Speed Trials program as a Class C Roadster entry because he pre-entered the car. In its place

they entered the coupe in Class C under Burford-Hedrich. Skip had no record of the speed the car reached, but thanks to Jim Miller of The American Hot Rod Foundation, we learned the Burford-Hedrich entry was Sixth fastest in class with a respectable 128.388 miles per hour. Mickey Thompson was First in class at 141.865 miles per hour.

As it turned out, Skip's roadster never made it to Bonneville, and it would be decades before he would return. He street raced the roadster for a couple of years before selling it to buy a T roadster.

An Historic T

Why would Skip sell his A roadster, that he spent years working on, to buy a crumpled T roadster that had seen better days? Well, this was no ordinary T roadster; it had history. Few, if anyone, gave a hoot about old hot rods or race cars back then. But Skip did.

That the T was literally built by hand in 1930 by Frank Pommer was an understatement. Pommer ran at Muroc dry lake when speed equipment was not something you ordered, it was something you made. Frank started with the frametrails from a Star automobile and added Model A front and rear crossmembers. While going to L.A. Trade Tech High School, Pommer fabricated the front axle out of 4140 chrome-moly tubing. He also made the kingpins from 4165 bar stock; he hand-fabricated the spring perches, tie rod, drag link, and the pitman arm. Frank also built the transmission case out of aluminum while going to



> Skip's finished Model T parked in front of his parent's house. The roadster caught the attention of Dean Batchelor, *Hop Up* magazine's editor, who wrote a feature on the car titled "Terrific T V-8" for the January 1953 issue. Unfortunately, Skip wasn't given credit in the story for restoring the roadster, specifically the nose.

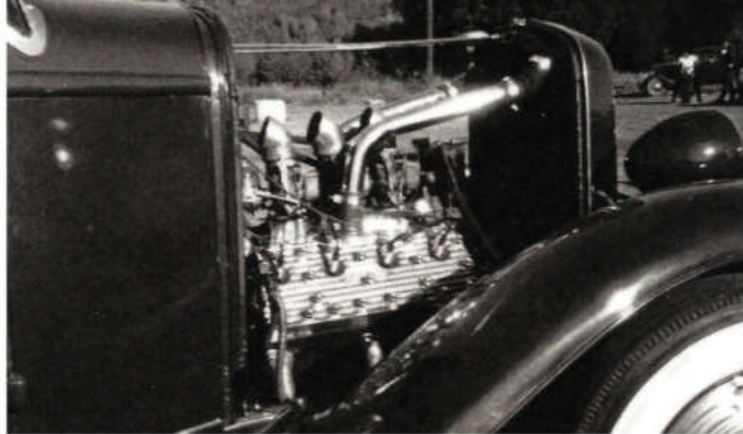


> If you had roll-up windows, the Southern California Timing Association wanted nothing to do with you until the first Bonneville Time Trials in 1949. Meaning, roadsters were for racing, closed cars weren't, at least in SCTA's eyes. And Skip, being a racer, had to have one. "I got it from Bruce Charlin and his brother Bill in 1954 when I was going to college. It was a beautiful showpiece of a Deuce. I drag raced it almost every weekend at Santa Ana, Saugus, and Pomona. It was also a girl magnet."



> Skip began his fabricating skills early when he built this Sprint Car in the mid 1950s. Jerry Huth built the first tube-bending prototype in 1958, so such a device wasn't available when Skip built the chassis. Instead, he packed sand into the tubing to keep the pipe from kinking, then heated the pipe and bent it. He fabricated everything on the car except the tail section.

> "My first Sprint Car race, in El Centro in 1962," says Skip. "I had to learn pretty fast that when I got spun into the wall it was because I was the new guy. My friend Colby Scroggins said when you go out again in the semi, you run that guy into the wall because it's your first race and everyone is watching you. If you don't put him in the wall, the other bullies will crash you every race." Scroggins won the CRA points championship in 1962.



> Skip's 3/8ths by 3/8ths 296ci flathead had all the whips, whistles, and balloons: Weiand intake manifold, Navarro heads, and a Kong (Jackson) ignition. "You could advance the ignition from inside the car," Skip recalls.

night school. Most importantly, the aluminum body panels and nose were formed by Frank Kurtis in Frank's backyard, long before Frank started Kurtis Kraft in Glendale.

The T was far from the gem that Pommer had built when Skip purchased it 23 years later for \$150. "It had been wrecked by the rich kid I got it from," Skip remembers. "The frame was bent, and I had to straighten it. The side panels, the hood, and the nose Kurtis built out of aluminum were completely wadded up."

Fixing the T's nose is a story unto itself. "I shaped the original nose with enough Bondo to make a plug out of it," Skip says, "and then I took it to some fiberglass guys to make a fiberglass nose. I couldn't get the nose to separate from the plug because their parting agent didn't work. I took a rubber mallet and tried to separate the aluminum from the mold just enough for a gap. I talked to the guys at Union Ice Company in Pasadena to allow me to put the mold in their icehouse. I taped it up to hold water, figuring if I put water between the aluminum nose and the mold, when the water froze it would expand, the aluminum would shrink, and it would pop the mold from the aluminum." It took multiple attempts of freezing, then widening the gap by adding more water, to accomplish Skip's theory, but the nose eventually popped. And it was a perfect match.

Skip's flathead went into the T. "I drag raced it at Pomona, Saugus, then I went to Santa Ana in 1953 with it. The record was 103.6, and I went 103.8. I never could get it any faster than that. I kept it a couple of years and sold it for \$4,200."

Midgets

Skip graduated from John Muir Junior College in Pasadena in 1953. Eventually, he went to Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, where he could have gotten a degree in mechanical engineering had he not started crewing on a Midget. The owner of the car let Skip take a couple of hot laps and he was hooked. "Those hot laps convinced me that was what I wanted to do. As a class project, I started building a 3/4 Midget with a Harley engine so I could use the school's machine shop welders nights and weekends."

Now, 3/4 Midgets weren't kid stuff. They were like speedway bikes with four wheels—very, very fast. Building the Midget may have been a loose form of mechanical engineering, but not the kind his parents, especially his father, envisioned. Skip went home in 1958 just 12 units shy of his degree. Racing the Midget would have to suffice as his sheepskin. "Who needs an engineering degree when you can drive a race car?" Skip reasoned.

Skip wound up trading the Midget for a Sprint Car, keeping the engine. The Sprinter was built by Eddie Kuzma, an L.A. area builder who fabricated the famed Championship car that Troy Ruttman drove to win the Indianapolis 500 in 1952. This was the Sprinter that Skip raced as he worked his way up for the chance to drive a Championship car.

Working for Master Builders

Skip continued to refine his craft by working for some of the best Championship car chassis builders in the trade. Quinn Epperley, who built the chassis that Jim Rathmann drove to Second behind Sam Hanks in 1957, hired Skip, as well as Lujie Lesovsky, another supreme metal shaper. "I'd work for Epperley on a project, then Lesovsky. I had a full-time job at Racing Associates, which was owned by Ebb Rose, who owned Rose Truck Lines. We went to Indy in 1962 where Ebb finished 14th."

The word got out that Skip was a quality fabricator. "Once they got to know me, they'd come and get me," he recalls, "like George Bignotti [who became A.J. Foyt's chief mechanic] and Andy Granatelli, who had me working on the Novi. I was working free-lance for various teams, busting my buns at Indy working in the pits to get my name out there, and to earn enough money to pay for my racing. I had a shop in Costa Mesa, and when I'd come back home, I'd work on other race cars."

May Day

Bruce Bromme hired Skip to help him sort out component problems on the radical magnesium rear-engine DOHC Ford V-8 Shrike (named after a bird of prey) that Eddie Sachs was to drive in the 1964 Indy 500. Skip would work on the car while it was still in California, then proceed to Indy as part of the team.

"Eddie Sachs, who I met in the garage working on the Shrike, became a mentor to me because I still had my eye on driving in the Indy 500," Skip says. "But the Shrike had a steering arm that had a shape that I said would not work. It was going to crack. Eddie took a couple of laps during practice for the 500, and the steering arm broke when he was on the back straightaway. Then a second arm that was heat treated differently broke, causing Eddie to spin the car onto the grass."

While the steering problem was solved, Sachs was rattled, according to Skip. "Eddie, we were told, went to a Catholic seminary for three days to be with the priests. When he returned to the Speedway he was his old self, waving to the crowd and ready to get into the car."

Skip is still haunted by what took place before the race started. "During the singing of *Back Home in Indiana*, Eddie unbuckled himself, stood up in the car, and looked up at the sky. He said, 'God, I'll be with you.' Not 'God, be with me.' He got back down in the car and we buckled him in again. I couldn't believe what I heard. I asked some of the guys around me if they heard what Eddie said. They did. We couldn't believe it. Just a few minutes later, Eddie was with God."

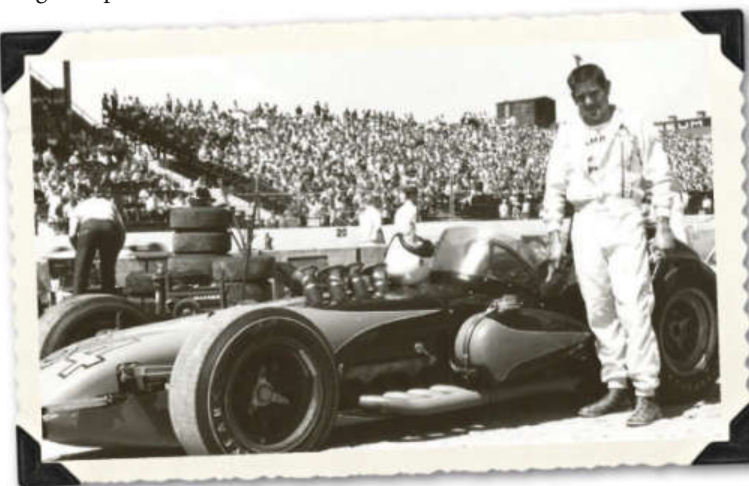
> That's Skip driving in the Trenton 200 in 1965, in as nasty-slippy a laydown roadster as you'll ever see. The Offy was almost on its side, in contrast with Wally Dallenbach next to Skip. "I acquired it in 1962 and drove it in 1963 through '65," says Skip. He finished 21st that race. Not impressed? While A.J. Foyt won the 200, Skip finished ahead of the likes of Rodger Ward, Jim Hurtubise, and Lloyd Ruby. He funded himself.

Veteran driver Sachs and rookie Dave MacDonald crashed in an orange and black mushroom cloud of gasoline. Sachs was beyond help, dying on impact. MacDonald passed later that day from injuries to his lungs from the fire.

As millions of us listened to Sid Collins describing the nightmarish crash in turn Four on the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Radio Network, Skip was grabbing a fire extinguisher to put out the flames on rookie Ronnie Duman's back. He sustained second- and third-degree burns as he crawled from his race car, which was caught up in the blazing crash. Looking at a photo of Eddie Sachs on Skip's office wall, Skip is still devastated by the events of that day.

Skip Buys an Indy Car—Cheap

Skip was working for Racing Associates in 1962-'63 when the rear engine Champ cars started coming in "and the front engine cars became dinosaurs," he recalls. "I asked what Racing Associates wanted for the front-engine roadster they parked. I was told to talk to Herb Porter, who was the chief mechanic on the roadster. Herb said \$138 for the car. That's what I paid for the laydown roadster," laughs Skip.



> Skip's photo of his slinky roadster taken over a half-century ago makes one wonder why a front engine Indy Car, with today's technology, can't be running the 500. After all, today's front-engined Funny Cars rival rear-engine Top Fuel Cars on the dragstrip.



Most devastating part of Skip's racing career was how it came to an end. "I had a ride at Indy driving for Federal Engineering. I was playing around on a Sunday afternoon and broke my knee riding a motorcycle. That was a turning point in my life."

What Skip thought would be a simple surgery to repair the knee turned into something far more serious. One month in the hospital turned into three, and his car owner couldn't wait. Skip lost his opportunity to race in the Indy 500. "I was in a body cast for three months in the hospital."

Frustrated at his slow recovery and anxious to return to racing, Skip slit the leg cast and entered a Sprint Car race in Phoenix, only to find the pain was too great to continue. That is when he called it quits.


Return to Bonneville

Skip's brother Holly went to Bonneville to drive a '90 Lincoln Mark VIII for Ford Motor Company. Skip went to watch as Holly set a record of 181.171 mph, impressive considering it had a stock engine rated at 290 hp.

After some 40 years away, Skip walked through the pits marveling at the sound of wide-open horsepower that he had never heard in any other form of racing. The memories from 1951 flooded back. Drivers he met while walking along the pits had similar racing backgrounds. Skip wondered why he stayed away so long. Then he walked by a streamliner with names on it with records that the car had set. "It was a beautiful piece of machinery. I talked to the owner, Jim Burkdoll, and told him about the race cars I had driven during my career. That afternoon, I had my 150-mph license. I ended up driving the streamliner for two years."

Skip drove everything on wheels with only one goal in mind: to strap himself in a Championship car to become one of the 33 drivers to make the field in The Greatest Spectacle in Racing. That did not happen. But Skip's legacy goes far beyond driving in the Indy 500. He created with his own hands a different kind of racing spectacle, a race car that appeared on the Salt Flats in 2001 that commanded a presence unlike anything seen before. In the American Eagle, he streaked down Bonneville's 5-mile course at 347 mph in the measured mile (with a terminal speed of 353 mph) to become a lifetime member of the 300 Mile Per Hour chapter of the 200 Mile Per Hour Club. That achievement resulted from an accumulation of everything he learned in life as a builder, a driver, and a visionary. His father taught Skip at age 9 to save his money so he could buy anything he wanted plus invest his money wisely. He has done both.

> When Skip returned to Bonneville in 1990, he met Jim and Juley Burkdoll and struck up a conversation about their streamliner. "I told Jim about my background, Jim put me in the car, and by 4:30 that afternoon I had my SCTA license." Before Skip moved on to build his own land speed racer, he reached close to record speed in class of 214.426 mph. "I drove for Jim and Juley for two years before I decided to build my own car in '96. We had a wonderful relationship."

> Skip makes certain that school children see the American Eagle, to reinforce the idea that "building race cars is not for the uneducated." Plus, he uses the Eagle's appearances to raise money for The North San Diego County Wounded Warriors. 



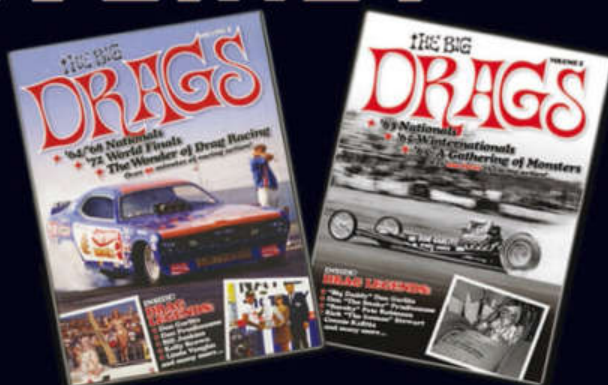
> The construction of Skip's streamliner was a complicated affair taking five years to build. "I envisioned a streamliner that was most importantly aerodynamically sound," says Skip. He worked with aerodynamicist Lynn Yakel, whose experience included work with NASA, to create a body "like an airplane fuselage, excluding the wings." Here, Skip is standing behind the top half of the plug used to make the fiberglass streamliner body.



> Visualize a Top Fuel dragster chassis, then compare it to Hedrich's chassis, both designed for the 300-plus-mph range. Skip not only designed the chassis, he built it. Though the streamliner did not pass the SCTA tech inspection in 2013, Skip is not a quitter and will be headed back to the Salt Flats.



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Instant Classic

Classic Instruments specializes in building gauges and gauge packages that combine retro styling with modern electronics. The cluster Veronica is holding is a Direct Fit Gauge Set for '40 Fords, which packages a speedometer, tachometer, fuel, oil, temp, and volt gauges in a deco-styled, injection-molded ABS housing. (Other gauge face designs for the '40 are available, too.) LEDs light up the cluster at night and provide the turn-signal and high-beam indicator lights as well. Direct Fit sets are also available for Shoebox Fords and a number of '50s Chevys. On the museum's podium is an example of another Classic Instruments product, the custom retrofit. The company can take your original gauges—in this case from a '34 Plymouth—and upgrade them with modern electronic movements. It's not a restoration, per se, but a customization so you can retain the gauges' original look and enjoy modern operation and precision.

Contact:

Classic Instruments;
844/342-8437;
classicinstruments.com

- PICS: WES ALLISON
- APPEAL: VERONICA JENSEN
- STYLING: KINNY & HOWIE
- RETRO BOUTIQUE
- HAIR & MAKEUP: DOLLED UP BY LULU
- JOINT: WALLY PARKS
- NHRA MOTORSPORTS MUSEUM

Iconic Windshield Frame

Pioneering hot rodder Duke Hallock is said to have cast his roadster's windshield frame back in the 1930s to mimic those he saw on new Auburn Speedsters. If you want that same look for your hot rod, replicas of that now-iconic v-shaped frame are available from Rotten Leonard's Jalopy Shop. Made to fit '30-'31 Model A roadsters, they're cast using 356 aluminum alloy, "so they can bend some without breaking," Leonard says. He ships them as bare castings with mounting hardware included, though Leonard advises, "Cowls will definitely vary from one to another, so some fitting will be required." Leonard also offers glass to fit the frames. The best part? The \$695 retail price is about half of what others are asking for similar frames.

Contact:

Rotten Leonard's Jalopy Shop; 208/816-2297;
rottenleonard.com



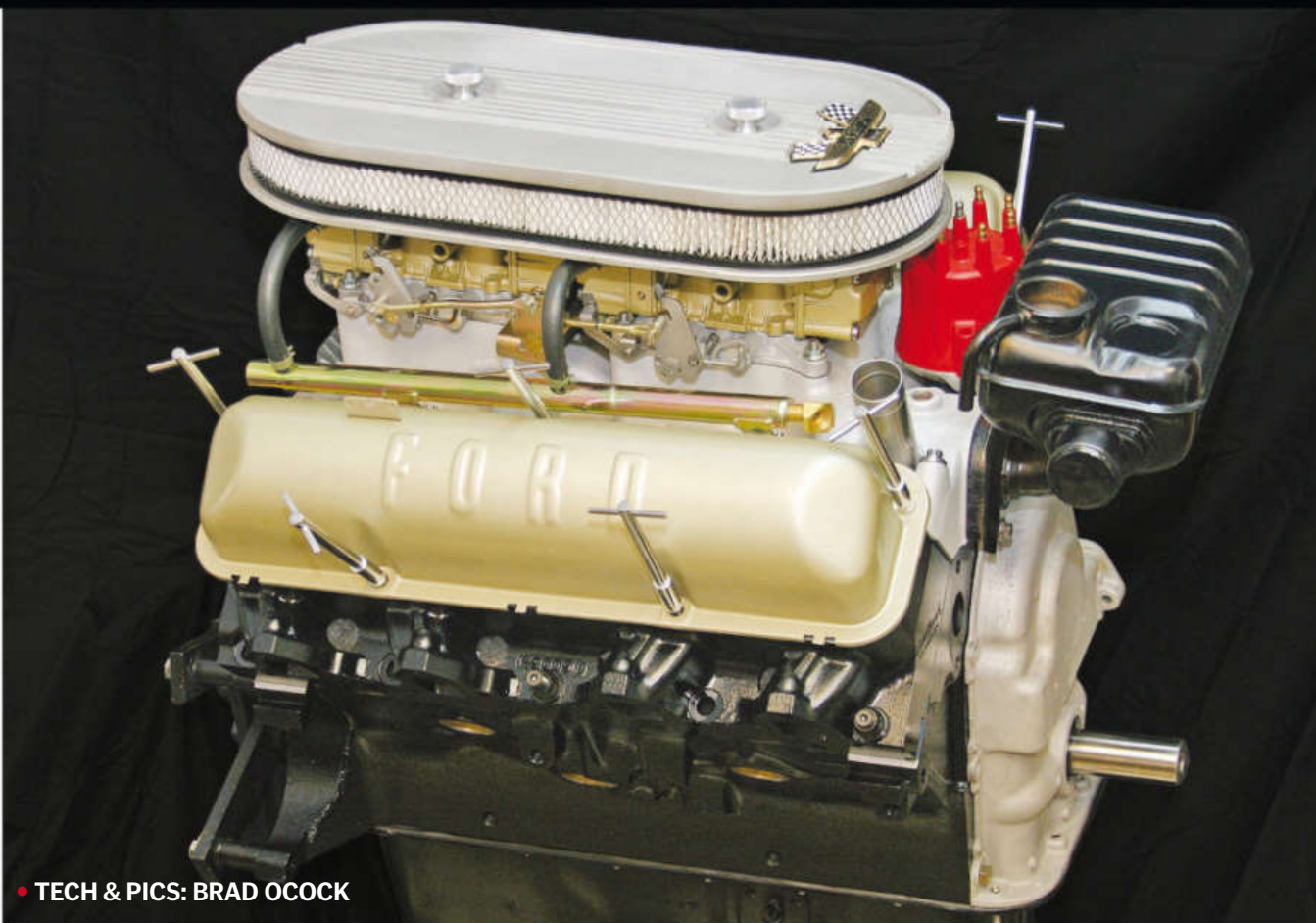
Keeping Your Cool

Hot rod engines can have a hard time staying cool, so check out this arrow in the cooling quiver: Derales' steel-blade rigid race fans. They get their vintage look from powdercoated steel construction, and they're designed to push maximum airflow at low and high engine speeds. Several diameters are available, from 17 to 20 inches, so you're sure to find one that'll fit behind your car's radiator.

Contact:

Derales Performance;
800/421-6288, derale.com





• TECH & PICS: BRAD OCOCK

Time Warp

★ Building a Stroker FE for our Altered, Part 1

Back in 1963, my uncle George dropped a then-new Super Stock-prepped 427 Ford into his altered roadster, went out and set the AHRA's National Mile per Hour class record at 140 mph, and held it for three years until selling the car. The 427 Ford is legendary, and it enjoyed a good run in the most iconic Ford performance cars. There's a lot of history that can be written about the FE engine starting in 1958, but what we're concerned with is building a period-correct drag engine like the one that was in George's No. 78 back in 1963-'65, without killing the budget.

The first thing for us to address was the acquisition of a core motor. While there were a lot of 427s to be had back in the old days, they're scarce now. You can find one if you want one, but the entry fee for a real 427 is pretty high, and a lot of the blocks are simply used up. The 427s had

a tendency to spit rods out the side of the block (hence the development of the side-oiler blocks, which direct-fed the main bearings to combat that issue, but they still kicked rods), and we've seen any number of repaired blocks for sale. The other issue is that a lot of blocks you find today are already bored 0.060 over. Even if they're only 0.030 over, FEs are known to have thin-wall castings, and you really don't want to go more than 0.030 over unless you have absolutely no other choice.

Fortunately, for those wanting to build a stout FE, you need look no further than your local junkyard. You can't throw a lug nut in the boneyard without hitting a 390. They were in passenger cars and trucks from 1961-'75, and if you can't find a 390, then you'll have no problem finding a 360 (also called a 361) FE in a truck from 1968-'76. If you can't get a complete FE

core engine for \$150 or less, you simply aren't looking with your eyes open. Parts availability is better than ever, and the FE is an extremely popular engine. In fact, Edelbrock told us the FE head is one of its top sellers.





1
> Some truck blocks, and the “mirror 105” block (named after a backwards “105” cast next to the timing chain cover) have an additional rib in the main webbing. Technically, this makes the block stronger, but they never break here anyway.

> Barry Rabotnick pointed out that the freeze plugs that normally come in rebuild kits aren’t the right size. They’re the more common 1³/₄-inch plugs, while the blocks actually require 1⁴⁹/₆₄-inch plugs. Without the right ones, the block will leak.



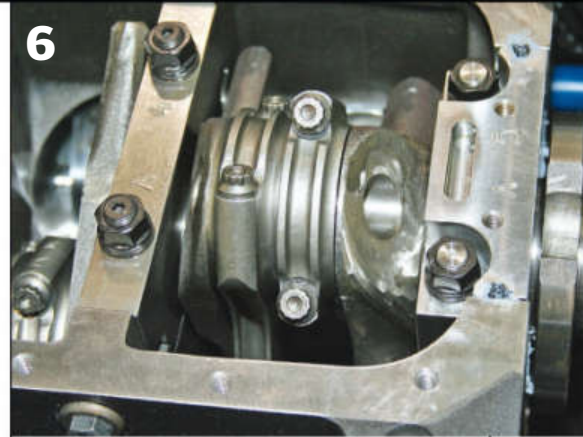
2
> There was a lot of casting flash and sharp edges all around the inside of the pain rail and webbing. Getting rid of that was the first step to the build.



4
> The plug at the back of the cam journal is installed flat-side out. Installing it backwards is a common mistake at shops that don’t specialize in FEs.



5
> Survival Motorsports’ Bill Blair spent some time balancing the Scat crank and rods.



6
> There are two things to see here: Bill first preps the crank by grinding the ends of the journals, which gets the balance a lot closer right out of the gate, and allows them to use less heavy metal to balance the cranks. The second is that the ARP stud kits come with either all studs or studs and bolts for the Number 5 rear main cap, required to clear the pain rail. Survival sticks with all studs, but typically mills them down to clear the rail.



7
> Our main stud kit came with a pair of shorter studs for the rear main cap. This is something Survival hadn’t seen before, so apparently ARP is now including shorter studs in all its kits, doing away with the necessity of cutting the two tall ones as Survival has been doing.

If you’re happy with 390 cubic inches, rebuild kits are relatively inexpensive, but the FE is yet another example of how great it is to be a hot rodder today. You can have the stock crank turned, the stock rods resized and buy new rod bolts, or for just a little extra you can get a Scat stroker crank with good I-beam rods and ARP fasteners.

We picked up a core motor at the NE Georgia Swap Meet for \$125, and before we got it apart, we found a bare “mirror 105” 390 block that is supposedly better for \$150. The “mirror 105” blocks have a reputation for being high-nickel blocks with thicker main webbing and thicker cylinders that can be bored to 427 specs.

“There’s a lot of magic out there,” FE guru Barry Rabotnick at Survival Motorsports tells us. “And most of it is just like magic: not true.” He’s sonic tested several



> Once the caps are set and torqued into place, Bill checks each set of bearings, and then double-checks the mains on the crank to ensure they're exactly right. It's not uncommon for them to swap out shells for +1 or +2 bearings to bring the clearances up to Survival's very narrow window of acceptability.



> It's hard to see here, but Survival offsets the rear main seal, so the seam in the neoprene isn't on the same line as the seam between the cap and block. It's an old racers' trick, but it still works.



> The Scat kits are available with cast or forged cranks, and I-beam or H-beam rods. Our mill is relatively tame at 500-550 hp, so we went with the cast crank and I-beams. The 6.700-inch rods are excellent pieces, with no casting ridges on the beams, bushed ends, and ARP bolts.

105 blocks and found the cylinders to be no thicker than other 390s of the era, so you won't be able to take one out to 427 specs and see it live. "We've never found them to be a different alloy from other Ford blocks either," he says. The one thing they do have is thicker, stronger webbing around the mains, "but FEs never break there," Barry says, so it's really not the hot ticket everyone says it is. If you have the choice to go with a mirror 105 block versus the other 390 or 360 blocks, the thicker

main webs are nice, so we built that one. (Incidentally, they're called mirror 105 blocks because on the front of the block, next to the timing cover on the passenger side, the number "105" is cast into the block backwards.)

Once we picked up the block, we had to decide what, exactly, we were going to build. Obviously, our first thought was "It's a race engine! We need power! We need bigger heads! We need the gnarliest cam we can get!" So we called Barry and

talked to him about a set of his proprietary aluminum heads with all the treatment, a monster cam, and so on.

And then we did the math. Not the money math, the power and vehicle math. An aluminum-head FE weighs about 600 pounds; a Powerglide weighs less than 100; the rearend with a spool and aluminum drums weighs in the neighborhood of 180; a buddy and I can pick up the chassis with full front suspension, steering, and seat, so that's about 250; the body weighs 60; front



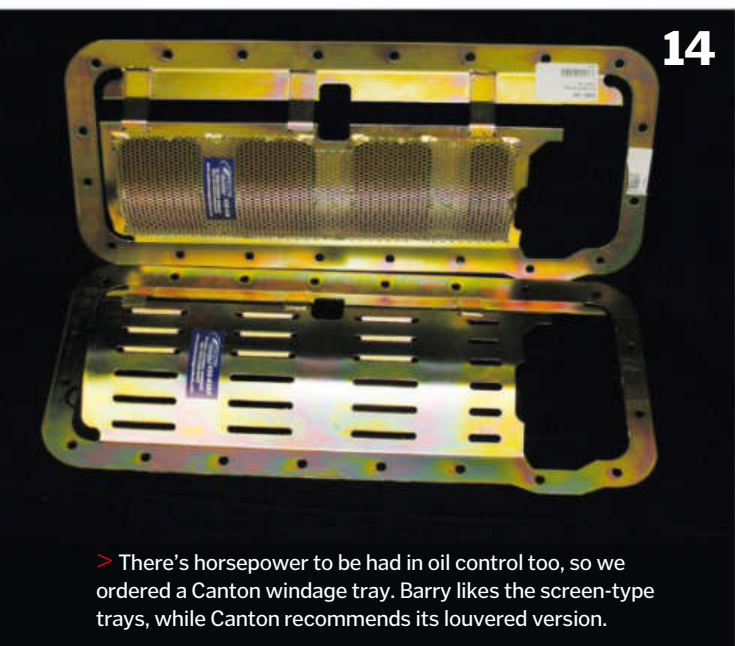
> The Mahle pistons are man jewelry. Lightweight forged castings, they come with a phosphate coating and coated skirts. They're high-end components at a very affordable price. We were impressed all the way around.



> Mahle provides rings with its pistons. These aren't out-of-the-box rings from one of its vendors, but are thin, 1mm, low-tension moly rings Mahle developed for use with its pistons. Besides excellent wear characteristics and sealing, there's horsepower to be had here by virtue of their low drag.



> The Mahle pistons come with dual round wire retainers. They work great, but Bill typically bleeds at least once when installing a set, and today was no different.



> There's horsepower to be had in oil control too, so we ordered a Canton windage tray. Barry likes the screen-type trays, while Canton recommends its louvered version.



> Even with the shorter studs in the rear cap, we had to notch the windage tray for clearance. Some people just leave the washer out of the fasteners to lower the stud or bolt head. The Canton tray sandwiches between the block and oil pan, and its kit includes oil pan studs and nuts.



> A typical Ford uses a front-sump oil pan and pickup, but for a drag car, we weren't real keen on the front-sump pan. It's very shallow at the back of the engine, and any oil that isn't in the sump is going to stack up at the shallow end of the pan and get into the crank during launch and hard acceleration.

Big Ford trucks came with full-sump oil pans that do away with this. It won't work in a Ford passenger car without a lot of modification to the crossmember, but in a FED, altered, some street rods or hot rod truck chassis, it works well.

drums and rotors add around 40; radiator, fuel tank, battery, and wiring are another 100; wheels and tires are generously 100; another buck-fifty for stuff I forgot; and 220 for my portly bulk. With some of those estimates being on the fat side, it's looking like the altered is going to come in somewhere around 1,800 pounds.

Every drag race calculator we could find on the Internet said 600 hp in an 1,800-pound car is going to put the thing in the low 8s at over 160 mph. To quote Clint

Eastwood, "A man has got to know his limitations." Right now, my limitations are somewhere north of 8-second e.t.s, and somewhere south of 150 mph. And by "somewhere," I mean "a long way."

One of the things George said about the original car was that with the S/S-prepped 427, it never needed any attention. "We never did anything to it. We checked the plugs between rounds, just because we felt like we had to do something, but that engine made pass after pass without any

work." There's a lot to be said for anvil-like reliability, both in terms of finances and maintenance. I don't want a high-strung, twitchy engine that's constantly needing maintenance or repairs to race. I want to race, not always be fixing the car. High-strung, high-horsepower engines also require high-dollar parts, especially FEs: once you go above 6,000 rpm, you need to step up the cost of valvetrain components.

After the reality check, Barry and I devised a much simpler, realistic plan: a

5,500-rpm redline, 500-550 hp, and pump gas. Unlike most other engine builders, all Survival Motorsports does is builds FEs. In fact, Barry literally wrote the book on it, and has kicked the snot out of competitors in several Engine Masters Challenges. Asking how to build 500 hp with a 5,500-rpm redline was like asking a baker how to make a loaf of rye bread: You and I would have to look up the ingredients and hope it comes out right, while Barry just rattled off the list with the confidence of hundreds of builds and untold thousands of dyno runs under his belt. A Scat 0.250-inch stroker kit, Mahle pistons, Lunati hydraulic roller cam, Harland Sharp roller rockers, box-stock Edelbrock heads and a factory low-riser 2x4 intake would do it.

That parts list might sound expensive, but it's surprisingly affordable. We were shocked to see how inexpensive the Mahle pistons are, while the build cost for a set of factory heads with all the trimmings comes close to the cost of new Edelbrocks, and that's for low-perf stockers that don't flow as well and have large compression-killing combustion chambers.



> The big truck pan has a long pickup that must be used too, so grab it when you grab the oil pan. Barry has said he's found the more oil capacity the pan has, the more power the engines make. We can only guess that's because a deeper pan keeps the oil out of the spinning crank.

This month we'll show you the assembly of the block and reciprocating assembly; next issue we'll finish the engine and test it on the dyno before dropping it between the rails. Yes, 500 hp seems pretty tame for a

dedicated race engine, but a sober look tells me I just don't need more. And while this one is going in a full-on race car, this combination would be ideal for a street-bound hot rod.

FE BORE X STROKE CHART

DISPLACEMENT	BORE	STROKE
360/361	4.047	3.500
390	4.052	3.784
406	4.130	3.784
410	4.052	3.980
427	4.232	3.784
428	4.132	3.980

STROKERS

DISPLACEMENT	BORE	STROKE
434	390 bore (+0.030)	4.125
445	390 (+0.030)	4.250
449	406/428 (+0.030)	4.125
462	406/428 (+0.030)	4.250
471	427 (+0.030)	4.125
486	427 (+0.030)	4.250



> The longer pickup requires a hole be drilled and tapped in what we thought was an ugly boss inside the pan rail. On big trucks, they're tapped from the factory. On our block, Bill had to drill and tap it.

SOURCES

ARP; 800/826-3045; arp-bolts.com
Canton Racing Products; 203/481-9943; cantonracingproducts.com
Edelbrock; 310/781-2222; edelbrock.com
Harland Sharp/Custom Speed Parts Mfg.; 440/238-3260; harlandsharp.com
Lunati; 662-892-1500; lunatipower.com
Mahle Aftermarket Inc.; 888/255-1942; mahle-aftermarket.com
MSD; 915/857-5200; msdperformance.com
Scat; 310/370-5501; scatcrankshafts.com
Survival Motorsports; 248/366-3309; survivalmotorsports.com



> These are the back sides of the 90-degree oil filter adapters. On the far left is the earlier version, with half-inch oil channels that are shallow. In the middle is one that Barry has ported a little to break the sharp corners and improve flow. On the far right is the post-'68 adapter with large 5/8-inch holes and deep channels. If you have the opportunity, go with the bigger one. More oil never hurts.

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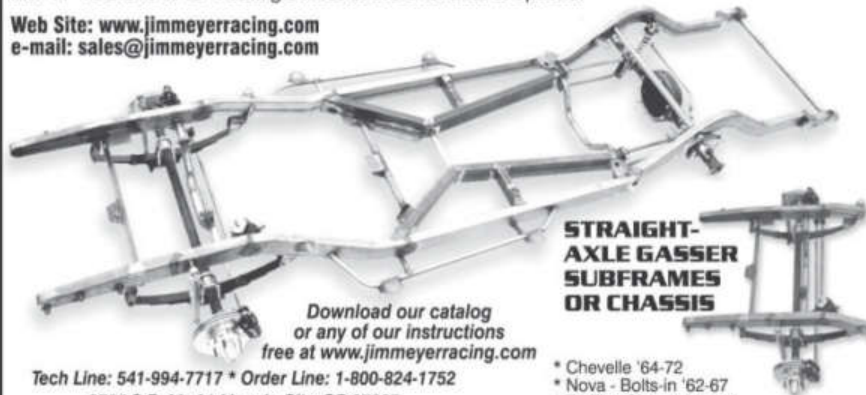
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These Scrapbook pages are your place to contribute to the magazine, in any way you think the other Deluxe readers would enjoy. Old-time photos from your (or your dad's, or grandpa's) racing or rodding days, shots of the car you've built, automotive junk piles found in an old barn, we like it all. This, too, is the forum for you to express your opinions about the mag, good and bad, like it or not. We can take it. It helps us make a better magazine. For photo submissions, digital photos are best (scanned or shot at high resolution, please), or you can mail us copies of your photos. Just please don't send originals, as they can get lost in transit.

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Godspeed, Grandpa

In July, my grandfather, Robert W. Monroe, Sr., passed away. He served in the Navy, was a machinist, and a long-haul truck driver. But his main passion in life was racing. Stock Cars, Midgets, even drag racing. We found these two photos among his things. The shot of him with the '32 Chevy Stock Car was taken around 1969 at Collins Field in Le Mars, Iowa. The second, of him in a '33 Ford Stock Car, was shot around 1966 at Raceway Park in South Sioux City, Nebraska. Grandpa was such an influence on all of us—the whole family is into cars, motorcycles, anything fast with wheels—that I wanted to share these in tribute to the man.

Michael Monroe



Nice 'n' Nasty

Here's one that was a feature car in HOT ROD magazine many years ago, but is in my barn now waiting for its new engine to be installed. The previous owner passed away several years ago from an illness, and this car was purchased from the estate. I raced it at Eagle Field in 2013. It had some problems, but we have a new 557ci tall deck injected BBC on alky. Should do the job! Check out the names on the rear deck lid—interesting.

Bill Babcock





Far Lane

Love the May issue, especially because my dad's C/A Ford coupe is in it. My dad, Don Borders, co-owned the coupe Bob Moody drove. Dad worked on it and Bob drove it. Bob and Dad have both passed. Today

my brother owns the coupe, and other than being faster than it was then, it looks much the same. I think it would be a great car to do a "Now and Then" story on.

Don Borders



Lil' Screamer

I began reading coverage of the U.S. Nationals in HOT ROD magazine back in 1961. My favorites were the factory hot rods including the F/X cars and the early altered wheelbase funny cars. The "Golden Age of Drag Racing" article about the 1965 season in your May issue brought back memories of the most outrageous factory hot rods, the first generation funny cars. At the time I was disappointed Dyno Don and the other top factory teams did not yet have their own class and did not win at Indy.

An unprecedented 46 cars competed for the B/Altered championship at the Nationals in 1965. In defending his 1964 championship, Jack Ditmars would find himself up against Don Nicholson, Ed Schartman, Phil Bonner, and Dick Brannan to name a few. It would be a David vs. Goliath showdown at Indy in '65. NHRA put these first-gen funny cars up against Ditmars' Lil' Screamer, who put them back on their trailers.

But Lil' Screamer's victory did not end there. In addition to class eliminations, NHRA brought in the nation's top wheelstanding cars to put on a show. After the funny car teams were soundly defeated, Jack was asked to slide the rear axle forward on his adjustable wheelbase '34 Ford and compete for the wheelstanding crown against the Hurst Hemi Under Glass. The November issue of HRM has full coverage of Jack's win and Lil' Screamer's victory lap with the Hemi Under Glass.

Jack raced Lil' Screamer from 1963 to 1967 and attained 13 national event wins. In 1966 Jack hired Joni Buttera, Lil' John's wife, as a match race driver. With a girl in the cockpit and nitro in the tank, the World's Wildest '34 Ford would become even more popular. Best times were low 9's at 150 with a bored and stroked 327 on 30 percent.

Jack would gain even more success with his Mini Brute '68 Opel and be honored by NHRA at the Hot Rod Reunion. Lil' Screamer is alive and well. I had no idea of Lil' Screamer's history when I found this sole survivor of Jack's five drag cars ready to be scrapped in 1979. What dumb luck for me.

Luck recently struck again when I was able to purchase Grumpy Jenkins' 1976 GMC motor home, complete with his national event decals, kitchen supplies, and clothing. Grump's motor home will make a great man cave to keep some of my memorabilia and a place for new friends we meet at the track to sit down, cool off, and have some refreshments. We look forward to attending select events and making a few wheels-up launches once we have completed the restoration of Lil' Screamer, Grump's motorhome, and Lil' Screamer's original enclosed trailer.

Mike Sleeth



Mike sent us some photos of the Lil' Screamer in its heyday, including the color photo of it pulling the wheels at Pomona. We found the other pictures in the Petersen archive: The color launch shot is from the 1965 AHRA Winter Nationals; and the black-and-white wheelie photo and staging lane photo were from Bud Lang's coverage of the '65 Indy Nationals for *Car Craft* magazine. That's Jack Ditmars on the right, and we believe he's joined in the photo by his friend and co-conspirator on Lil' Screamer Herb Moller.

Here's how Dick Wells described Lil' Screamer's wheelstanding action in the Nov. '65 HRM: "Jack Ditmars, driving his '34 coupe, 'Lil' Screamer,' which earlier won B/Altered class, did some wheelstands which almost tied Shrewsberry's demonstrations [in the Hemi Under Glass] in popularity. Jack has always been plagued with the high-ride tendency of his Chevy-equipped coupe, but for exhibition purposes at the Nationals, he removed the fifth wheel and showed what this ol' hot rod from Illinois can do if it's a show that's on order. Of course, he's probably riding with a new front end by now, but it was a spectacular show."





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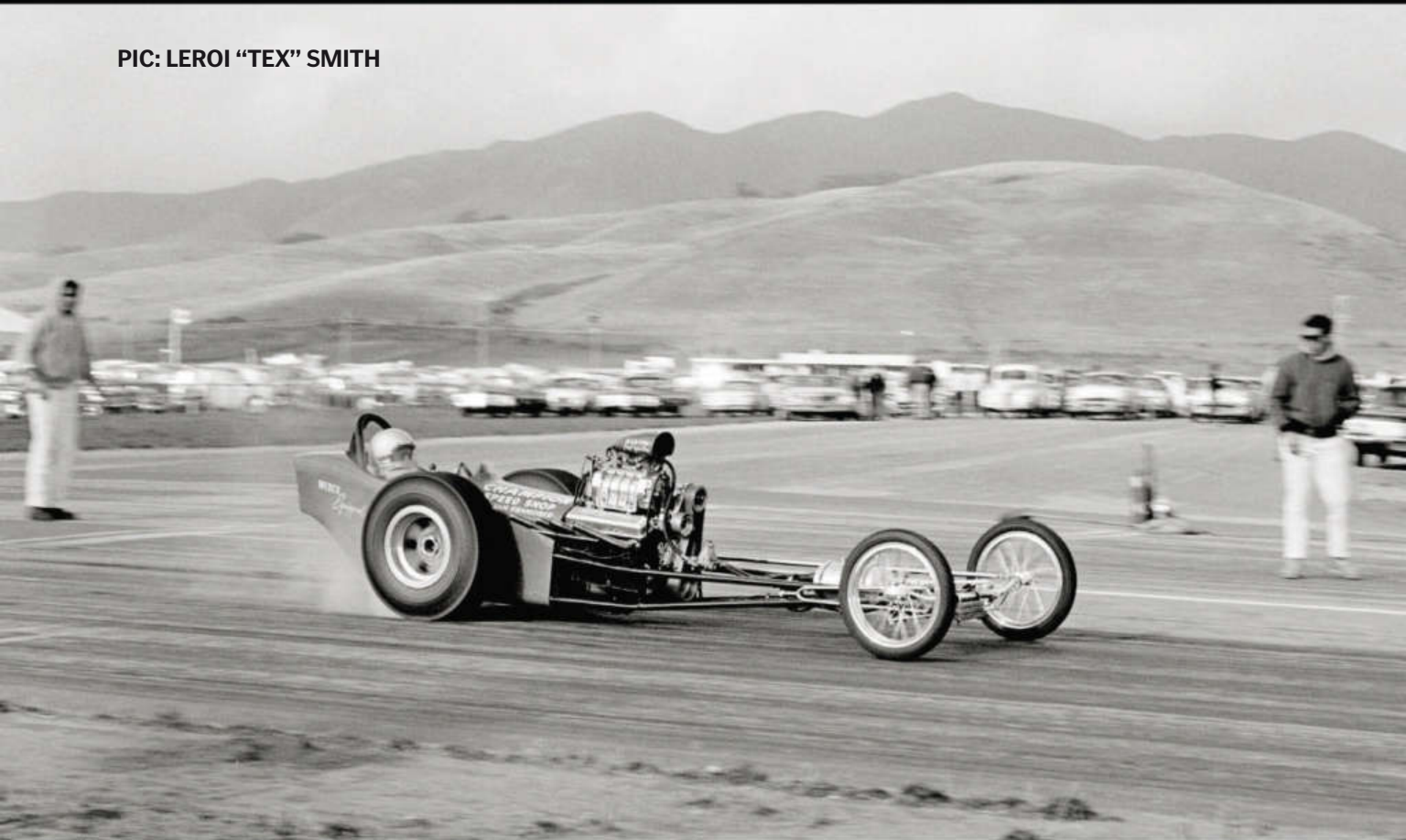
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PIC: LEROI "TEX" SMITH



Half Moon Bay

HRD is my favorite car mag, hands down, keep up the good work! However, I worry that eventually you are going to run out of rods from the '50s and '60s, and the people who built and drove them. That will be a sad day for all of us old farts. Have you ever done anything on the Half Moon Bay strip, home of the world's fastest Chevy, the Champion Speed Shop rail? The rivalry between them and Ted Gotelli's rail was legendary. Someone from the old Champion Speed Shop has a blown-up photo of Jim McClennan putting Garlits on the trailer. The guy who owns the HMB Bakery on Main Street downtown has a great collection of photos from the drags.

Chuck and Cammie Pisani

I don't think we're going to run out of hot rods and dragsters to cover, but the trick is getting to the right people before they're gone. The story on the Half Moon Bay strip is a great idea. We went into the archives for this outtake of the Champion Speed Shop rail from HRM's coverage of the 1962 NHRA California State Championships. That year Streakin' Sammy Hale won Top Eliminator in the car with an e.t. of 8.41.

—DREW HARDIN

Tub-T

I would like to thank you for doing articles on T-buckets (May '15). When I was a kid you opened a HOT ROD magazine and saw a lot of T-buckets. These days you don't see any. So when I saw the May issue with T-buckets, I had to buy it.

The Tub-T I have was built by Richard Greaves of Long Beach, California, in 1973 and was used for Hurst Shifters ads with Miss Hurst Shifter (Linda Vaughn) sitting on the back seat. The Tub-T has a '72 Ford 2,000cc Pinto motor with an Ak Miller turbo that was put on after the ad was shot. The motor is attached to a C4 transmission and cooled by a Jim Babb's radiator. The Jag rearend sports N50 Pos-a-traction tires, the front has 16x3.0 motorcycle tires with motorcycle brakes. The body is two T-bucket bodies fiberglassed together with shortened door panels. The interior is old school tuck-and-roll, with a Dan Woods steering wheel. All of this is sitting on an opposed-coil front suspension. The Tub-T has been stored for the last 30 years with the same paint and flames. Just thought you might like to see what's still out there.

Chris Spaulding



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• PIC: ERIC RICKMAN

Four Wheels with Abandon

It's July 1959, and the Go Kart Club of America is holding its first annual National Championships at the Go-Kart Raceway in Azusa, California. Eric Rickman is on hand to capture the action as these diminutive hot rods speed around the 11-turn, 4/10-mile track.

Bob Pendergast's story in the Oct. '59 HRM enthusiastically recorded all the results as if he were covering an NHRA National meet—though with smaller engines and lower speeds. Some 100 karts turned out for the event, a field that Pendergast called “the

undisputed elite of the corps. As a result the caliber of equipment and driving was tops, with not a single race relenting in its excitement long enough to allow even the most sophisticated spectator time to resume his seat.”

When it was all over, model Rita Trout handed trophies to the class winners, including the smiling gentleman seen here, Class C champion Al McDonald.

—DREW HARDIN

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